

YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

The Fitzroy Edition of
JULES VERNE

Edited by I. O. Evans



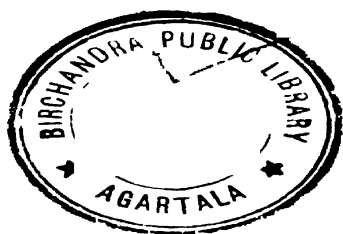
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Five Weeks in a Balloon
Dropped from the Clouds
The Secret of the Island
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Dr Ox and Other Stories
Measuring a Meridian
The Village in the Treetops
Salvage from the Cynthia
The Green Rav
Yesterday and Tomorrow

JULES VERNE

Yesterday and Tomorrow

Translated from the French by
I. O. EVANS
F.R.G.S.



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INTRODUCTION

FIVE YEARS after Jules Verne's death in 1905, half-a-dozen of his shorter works, which had never previously been published in book form, were included in one volume. This bears no editor's name, but the initials 'M.J.V.' to some of the footnotes may be those of his grandson, Michel Jules Verne.

That volume forms the basis of the present collection of short stories and oddments, hitherto, so far as I can ascertain, unpublished in Britain. Two stories included in the original volume have, however, been omitted as lacking in general interest, and have been replaced by others culled from various sources.

One of the omissions, *La Famille Raton* (this could perhaps best be translated as 'Mr. Rat and his Family') seems to be a fairy-story, but it is so absurdly fantastic that one cannot be certain whether Verne meant it 'seriously' as an entertainment for children or simply as a burlesque for the amusement of sardonic adults: it appeared in the *Figaro illustré* for January 1891.

The title of the other, *Le Humbug*, needs no translation: this is a fierce satire on a type of character whom the author disliked intensely, the boastful mendacious American 'go-getter'; its hero is a caricature of a super-Barnum. Written about 1893, it never appeared before Verne's death; it may, indeed, not have been written with a view to publication at all—its author may simply have been 'letting off steam.'

Towards the end of his life, his biographer Marguerite Allotte de la Fuye tells us, 'He proceeded to burn hundreds of letters, private papers, account books, and even unpublished manuscripts.' Two of his stories escaped the holocaust and were posthumously published, but whether their survival was due to deliberate intent or by inadvertence is not clear. As regards *Le Humbug*, inadvertence seems the more probable.

The contents of the present volume of course vary in interest; arranged as they are in chronological order, they will, I hope, throw increased light on Verne's many-sided character.

I. O. E.

THE FATE OF JEAN MORÉNAS

This story is another of those which never appeared during its author's lifetime—understandably enough, for it is obviously full of the wildest improbabilities. Written, his editor tells us, during its author's youth and later revised and considerably modified, it may possibly have had associations which made him loth to destroy it. It shows that though later in life his chief literary influences were Poe, Scott, and Fenimore Cooper, Jules Verne had in his early days derived much inspiration from two of the leading authors of his own country, Dumas and Victor Hugo.

ONE DAY—towards the end of September, a long time ago—a luxurious carriage drew up before the office of the Vice-Admiral Commanding the Port of Toulon. A man of about forty, solidly built but with rather a common look, descended and sent in along with his card some letters of introduction, bearing such names that the interview he asked for was at once granted.

‘I have the honour of addressing M. Bernardon, the well-known shipowner of Marseilles?’ asked the Vice-Admiral when his visitor had been shown in.

‘That is so,’ replied the latter.

‘Please take a chair’ the Vice-Admiral continued ‘and I shall be entirely at your service.’

‘I’m deeply grateful, Admiral’ M. Bernardon thanked him. ‘But I don’t think the request I’m going to put to you will be one of those to which you’ll find it hard to answer favourably.’

‘And what may it be?’

‘Simply to get permission to visit the prison.’

‘Certainly nothing could be easier’ the Admiral agreed ‘and there was no need for you to bring the introductions you showed me. Anyone who bears your name need not trouble about these honorific passports.’

M. Bernardon bowed. Then, having once more expressed his gratitude, he enquired what formalities he had to comply with.

‘There aren’t any’ was the reply. ‘Go and take the Major General this note, and you’ll at once be granted whatever it is you seek.’

Having taken his leave, M. Bernardon was escorted to the Major General, from whom he at once got permission to enter the Arsenal. An orderly took him to the Prison Superintendent, who offered to show him round.

The Man from Marseilles, while thanking him warmly, declined his offer and expressed a wish to go alone.

‘Just as you like, Sir’ agreed the Superintendent.

'There's no objection then, to my going about freely within the prison?'

'None at all.'

'Nor to my having a word with the inmates?'

'Not nowadays. The officials will be advised, and you won't meet with any difficulty. But would you let me enquire your purpose in making this visit, which is hardly what one would call cheerful?'

'My purpose?'

'Yes. Is it only to satisfy your curiosity, or have you any other motive—a philanthropic one, for example?'

'Philanthropic, certainly' M. Bernardon assured him.

'Splendid!' exclaimed the Superintendent. 'We're used to these visits, and they're looked on very favourably in high quarters, for the Government are always seeking for improvements to introduce into the prison rules. Quite a number have been carried out already.'

M. Bernardon made an approving gesture, though he said nothing, as though such considerations did not much interest him. But the Superintendent, full of his subject and finding this occasion favourable for a declaration of his principles, did not notice this discrepancy between the indifference of his visitor and the avowed aim of the latter's visit, and continued imperturbably:

'It's very hard to keep a proper balance in such matters. While we must not exceed the rigours of the law, we've also got to keep on our guard against the sentimental critics who forget the crime while seeing the punishment. Anyhow, we never lose sight of the need to mitigate justice.'

'Your feelings do you great honour' M. Bernardon replied. 'And if they should interest you, I shall be very pleased to give you any suggestions I can make after I've visited the prison.'

The two then separated, and the Man from Marseilles, provided with a written authority in due form, went off towards the prison.

If there is any place in the world where equality ought not to prevail it is certainly within a prison. Varying with the magnitude of the crimes and the degree of moral turpitude, the scale of penalties ought to imply distinctions of castes and ranks. But far from this. Convicts of all ages and all types are shamefully huddled together. From that deplorable promiscuity there can only result a hideous cor-

ruption, and the contagion of evil ravages among this gangrenous mass.

*At this time the Toulon prison then contained nearly four thousand convicts. Work on the Harbours kept three thousand of them busy, and to these the hardest labour was assigned. Those not included among them were employed in the harbour, on ballasting and deballasting and towing ships, on shifting mud, and on loading and unloading munitions or stores. There were also sick-bay attendants; men specially employed; and those condemned to be doubly chained on account of their attempts to escape.

When M. Bernardon made his visit no attempt of this kind had been recorded for some time, and for several months the alarm-gun had not resounded in Toulon Harbour.

Not that the never-resting love of liberty had grown enfeebled in the hearts of the prisoners, but discouragement seemed to have weighed down their chains. After a few of the warders, convicted of carelessness or treachery, had been sent to join the prisoners, a sort of point of honour had made more strict and more meticulous the watchfulness of the others. Without allowing himself to be lulled into a false security—for at Toulon escapes had been more frequent and easier than at any other of the ports where prisoners were employed—the Superintendent of the prison congratulated himself on this result.

Half-past twelve was striking on the Arsenal clock when M. Bernardon reached the end of the harbour. The quay was deserted. Half an hour earlier the bell had recalled to their prison the convicts who had been at work since dawn, and each had been issued with his rations. The life-prisoners had got back on their benches, to which the warder had at once chained them, while the long-term prisoners were free to move anywhere about the room. On the sound of a whistle they gathered around their mess-tins, which contained a soup made, year in and year out, of dried beans.

Work would be resumed an hour later, not to be left off until eight that evening. Then the convicts would be taken back to their prisons, where for a few hours' sleep they would at last be allowed to forget their fate.

* Verne leaves this vague—possibly about the end of the eighteenth century?—I. O. E.

II

M. BERNARDON took advantage of the prisoners' absence to examine the lay-out of the harbour. But it might be supposed that his interest in this was rather casual, for soon he had made his way to an officer whom he addressed without any preamble: 'What time, sir, do the prisoners come back to the harbour?'

'At one o'clock' the officer replied.

'Are they all mingled together and assigned indiscriminately to the same work?'

'No. They're employed on different tasks under the supervision of the foreman. In the locksmiths' shops and the rope-walks and the foundries, where special knowledge is needed, you'll find some excellent workmen.'

'They earn their living there?'

'That's right.'

'At what rate?'

'That's all according. Just now a day's work may bring them in five to twenty centimes. On task-work they may get up to thirty.'

'And they can use this handful of coins to better their lot?'

'Yes' the officer assured him. 'They can buy tobacco for—in spite of the rules—they're allowed to smoke. And for a few centimes they can get a little stew or some vegetables.'

'The lifers and the long-term prisoners all get the same pay?'

'No, the latter have a supplement of a third which is kept until their sentences expire. Then they get this in full, so that they won't be completely destitute when they leave prison.'

'Ah!' sighed M. Bernardon, who seemed to be wrapped in thought.

'My word, sir' the officer continued. 'They're not so badly off. If they don't make things worse for themselves by making trouble or trying to escape, they've got less to complain of than many a workman in the town.'

'If they do try to escape' asked the visitor, in tones which seemed slightly different 'is a longer sentence the only punishment they get?'

'No. They earn a flogging and a double chain.'

'A flogging ...' M. Bernardon repeated.

'That consists of a number of blows on the shoulders, from fifteen to sixty according to circumstances, given with a tarred rope's end.'

'And, of course, escape is out of the question for a convict in double chains?'

'Well, almost' the officer replied. 'These convicts are chained by the foot to their benches and never allowed out. In those conditions escape isn't so easy.'

'So it's while they're at work that most of them get away?'

'No doubt about that. Although they're supervised by the warders and chained together by twos, the convicts have to have some freedom—the nature of the work demands that. And so clever are these fellows that no matter how carefully they're watched the strongest chain gets cut through in less than five minutes. When the fastening rivetted into the ball is too hard, they keep the ring around their leg, and break the first link in the chain. Many of them, the ones who are employed in the locksmiths' workshops, can easily get hold of the tools they need. Sometimes the plaque marked with their number is enough, and that's only tin-plate. If they can get hold of a piece of watch-spring, the alarm-gun will soon be sounding. In short, they've got a thousand tricks, and one man gave away no less than twentytwo of them to escape a flogging.'

'But where do they hide these things?'

'Everywhere and nowhere. One of the convicts had dug holes in his armpits and slid little slips of steel between his flesh and his skin. And quite recently I took a straw basket from another of them, and in every one of the straws there was a file or a saw which you could hardly see! There's nothing impossible, sir, to men who want to get back their freedom.'

Just then one o'clock sounded. The officer saluted M. Bernardon and went back to his post.

The convicts now came out of the prison, some of them singly, others linked together in pairs, and all supervised by the warders. Soon the harbour was echoing with the sound of voices, the clank of iron, the threats of the turnkeys.

In the artillery park, where chance had led him, M. Bernardon had found a notice with the penal code of the jail:

'Sentenced to death: any convict who strikes an officer,

who kills a fellow-prisoner, who revolts or foment^s revolt. Sentenced to three years of double chain, any life-prisoner who tries to escape; three years' extension of sentence to any long-term prisoner who commits the same crime, and an extension to be settled by the court to any such convict who steals a sum of more than five francs.

'Sentenced to a flogging: any convict who breaks his chain or possesses anything whatever that might help him in getting away, on whom is found any sort of disguise, who steals any sum of less than five francs, who gets drunk, who plays at games of chance, who smokes in the harbour, who sells or defaces his clothes, who writes without permission, who has a sum of over ten francs found upon him, who attacks a fellow-prisoner, who refuses to work, or who shows any insubordination.'

After reading this, the Man from Marseilles grew very thoughtful.

He was aroused from his reflections by the arrival of a party of convicts. The port was now in full operation; work was going on everywhere. Here and there could be heard the harsh voices of the foremen:

'Two pairs for St. Mandrier!'

'Fifteen *anklets* for the rope-walk!'

'Twenty pairs for the mast-house!'

'Another-six red-caps at the docks!'

The workers thus called for went off to the places assigned to them, spurred on by the threats of the warders, and often by their redoubtable sticks. The Man from Marseilles looked carefully at the convicts who were filing past him. Some were harnessed to heavily-laden carts; others were carrying on their shoulders great baulks of timber, piling up or removing building material, or hauling vessels along with a tow-rope.

The convicts were indiscriminately clad in a red jacket, with a waistcoat of the same colour, and trousers of coarse gray cloth. The woollen bonnet of the life-prisoners was green; unless they had some special ability they were employed on the roughest work. Those regarded with suspicion because of their vicious instincts or their attempts to escape were capped with a green bonnet bordered with a broad red stripe. To the long-term prisoners was assigned a red bonnet, decorated with a tin plaque inscribed with their number on the prison register. It was these whom M. Bernardon looked at most attentively.



Some, chained in pairs, had irons which weighed from eight to twentytwo pounds. The chain, starting from the foot of one of the convicts, led up to his belt, to which it was fastened; thence it extended first to the belt, and then to the foot, of his companion. These wretched fellows jestingly called themselves the 'Knights of the Girdle.'

Others bore only a ring and a half-chain of nine or ten pounds, or even the ring alone—called the 'anklet' and weighing from two to four pounds. A few violent convicts had their foot gripped in a 'candlestick', a triangle of iron which, rivetted around the leg and specially tempered, would resist any attempt at breaking it.

M. Bernardon, having a word now with the convicts and now with the warders, traversed the whole of the harbour. Before him passed a lamentable scene enough to move the heart of any philanthropist. And yet, to tell the truth, he did not seem to be looking at it. Without paying attention to his surroundings his eyes quested from side to side, glancing at the convicts one after another as though in that distressing crowd he was looking for someone who did not expect him. But his search was carried on in vain, and every now and then the anxious visitor could not keep from making a gesture of discouragement.

His chance wanderings at last brought him by the mast-house. All at once he stopped in his tracks, and his eyes were fixed on one of the men harnessed to the capstan. From where he stood he could see the convict's number, number 2224, engraved on the tin plaque fastened to the red bonnet of a man condemned to a long term of imprisonment.

III

No. 2224 was a strongly-built man of thirtyfive years. His frank look denoted both intelligence and resignation. Not the resignation of the brute whose mind has been destroyed by degrading work, but the considered acceptance of an inevitable misfortune—nor was this inconsistent with the survival of an inward energy, revealed in the steadfastness of his gaze.

He was chained to an old convict who, more hardened and brutalised, contrasted strongly with him, and whose low forehead could shelter only the most sordid thoughts.

The pairs of convicts were then hoisting the lower-masts of a newly-launched vessel, and to keep time they were singing a song called *The Widow*; by this they meant the guillotine, the widow of all those whom it slays.

M. Bernardon waited patiently for a break in the work. The pair in whom he was interested took advantage of this to rest: the older of the two stretched himself out on the ground while the younger stood upright, leaning against the arms of an anchor.

The man from Marseilles went up to him: 'My friend' he said. 'I'd like a word with you.'

To move towards the newcomer, No. 2224 had to pull his chain, and its movement aroused the older convict from his sleep.

'Hi, there!' he exclaimed 'can't you keep still? . . . Are you trying to cut me in half?'

'Shut up, Romain. I want to speak to this gentleman.'

'No, I tell you.'

'Let out a bit of your chain.'

'No! I've coiled up my half.'

'Now, Romain!' No. 2224 was beginning to get angry.

'Oh well, let's play for it!' and Romain pulled out of his pocket a pack of dirty cards.

'All right' replied the younger convict.

The chain which bound these two convicts contained eighteen links, six inches long. Each of them had nine, which gave him that much freedom.

M. Bernardon went up to Romain. 'I'll buy your half of the chain' he told him.

'Is there much in it?'

The merchant took five francs out of his purse.

'Five!' exclaimed the old convict. 'Done!'

He grasped the money, which vanished Heaven knows where; then, unrolling the chain which he had coiled up in front of him, he lay down again and turned his back to the sun.

'What do you want with me?' No. 2224 asked the Man from Marseilles.

Looking hard at him, the latter replied: 'You're called Jean Morénas. You've been sentenced to twenty years hard

for murder and robbery with aggravating circumstances. You've now done just half your sentence.'

'That is so' Jean Morénas agreed.

'You're the son of Jeanne Morénas, of the village of St. Marie-des-Maures.'

'My mother—dear good woman!' the convict replied sadly. 'Don't talk to me about her! She's dead!'

'More than nine years ago' M. Bernardon replied.

'That's true, too. Who may you be, Sir, to know so much about my business?'

'What does that matter?' M. Bernardon replied. 'The great thing is that I want to talk to you. Listen carefully, for we can't talk too long. In two days' time, get ready to escape. Buy your companion's silence. Promise whatever you like, I'll keep it. When you're ready, you'll get all the instructions you need. Good-bye!'

The Man from Marseilles went quietly on with his inspection of the prison. Leaving the bewildered convict, he walked on round the arsenal, and visited several of the workshops. Before long he went back to his carriage, whose horses bore him away at a brisk trot.

IV

FIFTEEN YEARS before M. Bernardon had this brief talk with No. 2224 in the Toulon prison, the Morénas family, consisting of a widow and her two sons, Pierre, then twenty-five years old, and Jean, five years younger, were living happily in the village of St. Marie-des-Maures.

Both the young people worked as joiners; there was plenty of work for them in the village and its neighbourhood. Both being equally competent, they were equally in demand.

The places they occupied in the public esteem were, on the other hand, quite unequal, and it must be admitted that this difference in their treatment was justified. While the younger, diligent at his work and passionately adoring his mother, would have served as a model for all sons everywhere, the elder did not hesitate to break out occasionally.

Violent and hot-headed, he was always ready to flare up; often, when he had been drinking, he got involved in quarrels or fights, and his words did him more harm than his deeds.

He seemed to have no control over his tongue. He cursed his life, confined to this little corner of the mountains, and announced that he wanted to go and make a speedy fortune under other skies. It needed no more than this to arouse distrust in the conventional minds of the peasants.

Certainly the grievances under which he laboured did not seem very serious. That was why, while sympathising with his brother, most of the villagers were content to regard Pierre as a hot-head who, according to life's chances, might be capable either of good or of harm.

So, in spite of these passing clouds, the Morénas family was happy with a happiness which it owed to its being completely united. As sons, neither of the young men, on the whole, deserved serious criticism; as brothers they were very fond of one another, and anyone who attacked one of them found that he had two enemies to deal with.

The first distress which befell the little family was the disappearance of the elder son. On the very day when he reached twentyfive, he went off as usual to his work, which happened to take him to another village nearby. In the evening his mother and his brother in vain awaited his return. Pierre Morénas never came back.

What had happened to him? Had he been killed in one of the brawls in which he was so often involved? Had he become the victim of some accident or crime? Or had he simply lost his memory? No reply ever came to these questions.

The mother's despair was indeed bitter. But time did its work, and little by little their existence resumed its peaceable course. Gradually, sustained by the love her second son bore her, Madame Morénas came to know that resigned grief which is the only happiness possible to hearts smitten by misfortune.

Five years thus elapsed, five years during which the filial devotion of Jean Morénas never flagged for an instant. It was at the end of that period, just as he in his turn reached his twentyfifth year, that a second and more terrible disaster fell upon that little family, already so cruelly tried.

At some distance from her cottage, the widow's brother, Alexandre Tisserand, kept the only inn in the village. With

Uncle Sandre, as Jean used to call him, lived his god-daughter, Marguerite Marie. Many years before, on the death of her parents, he had welcomed her; and, once having entered the inn, she had never left it. Helping her protector and godfather in keeping the little hostelry, she had lived there, passing successively through all the stages of childhood and adolescence. When Jean Morénas reached twenty-five years of age, she was eighteen, and the little girl of yore had become a maiden as sweet and tender as she was beautiful.

She and Jean had grown up side by side. They had shared together in the games of childhood, and the old inn had many times resounded with their merriment. Then, by degrees, the nature of their amusements had changed, at the same time as—in Jean's heart at any rate—the childish friendship of their early days had gradually been transformed.

The day came on which Jean loved like a sweetheart the one whom he had previously regarded as a cherished sister. He loved her, just as he loved his mother, with all the honesty of his nature, with the same unselfishness, the same intensity, offering them equally his whole soul.

Yet he kept silence and said nothing to her whom he wished to make his wife. For, as he realised only too well, the girl's feelings had not developed like his. While his brotherly affection had gradually been transformed into love, Marguerite's heart was unchanged. Her eyes regarded the companion of her childhood as calmly as ever, without any new trouble to obscure the purity of their blue.

Realising this difference of outlook, Jean kept silent and hid his secret hope—to the great annoyance of Uncle Sandre, who, having the highest regard for his nephew, would have been happy to entrust to him both his god-daughter and the modest savings which he had accumulated in forty years of dogged work. But the uncle never despaired. Everything could be settled, and Marguerite was still quite young. When she was a little older, she would realise the merits of Jean Morénas, and he, grown more confident, would ask a question which would receive a favourable answer.

This was the position when an unexpected tragedy convulsed St. Marig-des-Maures. One morning Uncle Sandre was discovered dead, strangled, in front of his counter,

whose drawer had been rifled of its last coin. Who was responsible for this murder? Justice would have sought him in vain had the dead man himself not taken care to name him. Clutched in the body's hand was found a crumpled paper on which Alexandre Tisserand had traced the words: 'It was my nephew who . . .' He had not had the strength to write more, death having stopped his hand in the middle of the accusation.

This, anyhow, was quite enough. As Alexandre Tisserand had only the one nephew, no hesitation was possible.

The crime could easily be reconstituted. On the previous evening there had been nobody in the inn. So the assassin must have come from outside, and he must have been well-known to the victim, for the latter, though very distrustful by nature, had opened the door to him without hesitation. It was no less certain that the crime had been committed fairly early in the evening, for Alexandre Tisserand was still fully dressed. To judge by the incomplete accounts lying on the counter, he had been making up his day's takings when his visitor had appeared. As he went to open the door he had unconsciously taken with him the pencil he was going to use to write his murderer's name.

Hardly had the latter entered when he had seized the victim by the throat and levelled him to the ground. The drama had been over in a few minutes. No other trace had been left of the struggle, and Marguerite, in her room—some distance away, it is true—had not heard anything.

Believing the inn-keeper dead, the assassin had emptied the drawer, and made a thorough search of his bedroom, as was shown by the over-turned bed and ransacked cupboards. At last, having collected his booty, he had hurried away without leaving any indications to betray him.

That was what he had fancied, at least, but the wretch had not bargained for retribution. The man whom he had thought dead was still alive, and had regained a few minutes' consciousness. He still had the strength to trace these few words on which the enquiries were to be based, and which a last spasm of agony had interrupted so tragically.

The whole village was amazed. Jean Morénas, that good workman, that good son, an assassin! Yet they had to give way to the evidence, and the dead man's accusation was too formal to permit of any doubt. Such, at least, was the

opinion of justice. In spite of his protests, Jean Morénas was arrested, tried, and condemned to twenty years' imprisonment.

For the mother, this appalling drama was the last stroke. From that day onwards she fell into a decline, and less than a year later she followed her murdered brother to the grave.

A pitiless fate had slain her too soon. She went just at the moment when, after so many trials, one happiness would at last have returned to her. The earth had hardly fallen on her coffin when her elder son, Pierre, reappeared.

Where had he come from? What had he done during his six years' absence? What countries had he visited? In what circumstances had he returned to the village? He never explained, and, however great the public curiosity might be, the day at last came when, wearied out, they stopped asking such questions.

Anyhow, if he had not made his fortune, in the strict sense of the word, he did not seem to be completely destitute. He carried on his former trade of joiner only by fits and starts, and for two years he seemed to be living on his private means at St. Marie-des-Maures, going off occasionally to Marseilles, to attend, as he said, to business.

He spent these two years not in the house which he had inherited from his mother but in Uncle Sandre's inn. This had now become Marguerite's property and, since the tragic death of her godparent, she had been running it with the help of a servant.

So, as might easily have been foreseen, an idyll gradually developed between the two young people. What the calm energy of Jean could not do was accomplished by the somewhat brutal character of Pierre. To his growing love Marguerite responded by a similar affection. Two years after the death of the widow Morénas, three years after the murder of Uncle Sandre and the sentence of the assassin, the marriage of the young people was celebrated.

Seven years elapsed, and during these three children were born to them, the youngest being hardly six months old when this story began. A happy wife, a happy mother, Marguerite had thus spent seven years of contentment.

She would not have been so happy had she been able to read the heart of her husband, had she known the vagabond existence of the man to whom her life was bound. Within six years he had gone from pilfering to theft, from theft to

swindling, from swindling to downright robbery. And, above all, if she had realised what part he had played in the death of her godfather . . .

Alexandre Tisserand had told the truth when he had denounced his nephew—but now deplorable it was that the death-agony, by disturbing his hand and brain, had kept him from being more definite! It was, indeed, his nephew who had been responsible for that abominable crime; but that nephew was not Jean—it was Pierre Morénas!

At the end of his resources, reduced to the last degree of poverty, Pierre had returned during the night to St. Marie-des-Maures, with the definite intention of getting his hands on his uncle's savings. The resistance of the victim had turned the robber into an assassin.

Having felled the innkeeper, he had carried out a systematic plundering, and then had fled into the night. Of the death of his uncle, who, he thought, had only fainted, of the arrest and condemnation of his brother, he had known nothing. So a year later he had calmly returned to the village, never doubting that after so long a lapse of time he would easily obtain his pardon. It was only then that he had learned of the death of his uncle and his mother and the condemnation of his brother.

At first he was overwhelmed. The position of his young brother for whom, over twenty years, he had been united by so real an affection, had aroused the most poignant remorse. But what could he do to make restitution—unless he were to disclose the truth, to denounce himself, and to take the place in prison of that innocent man so unjustly condemned?

Under the influence of time, his regret and remorse subsided. Love did the rest.

But remorse returned when his married life went on so peaceably. Every day the memory of the innocent prisoner weighed heavier on the mind of the culprit who had gone scot-free. The years of childhood incessantly recurred to him ever more clearly, and the day at last came when Pierre Morénas began to dream of some method of delivering his brother from the chains which bound him. He was, after all, no longer the destitute beggar who had left St. Marie-des-Maures to seek in the wide world the fortune he had never found. Now the beggar had become a man of property, the foremost in his village, and he no longer lacked

money. Could not that money be used to free him from his remorse?

V

JEAN MORÉNAS followed M. Bernardon with his eyes. He could hardly understand what had happened. How did that man know so well the vicissitudes of his life?

That was an insoluble problem. But anyhow, whether he understood what was happening or not, he must certainly accept the offer that had been made to him. So he must get ready to escape.

First of all, he would have to inform his companion of the attempt he was planning. There was no way of managing without this, for the chain which united them could not be broken by one of them without the other's knowing it. Perhaps Romain would want to take advantage of this opportunity, and this would lessen his own chances of success.

As the old convict had only eighteen months to serve, Jean tried to show him that he ought not to risk having his sentence increased. But Romain, who saw the chance of getting something out of it, would not listen to reason, and refused obstinately to lend himself to his comrade's plans. However, when the latter mentioned a thousand francs to be paid on the spot and another thousand which would be waiting for the old man when he came out of jail, Romain began to stop turning a deaf ear and to enter into the ideas of his partner in chains.

This point settled, the method of escape had to be decided. The great thing was to get out of the harbour without being seen, so as to escape from the vigilance of the warders and the sentries. Once in the open country, before the police were notified, it would be easy to deceive the peasants, and as for those whom the hope of a reward made more clairvoyant, they would certainly not resist the charms of an even larger sum.

Jean Morénas decided to escape during the night. Although he was a long-term prisoner, he was housed not in one of the ancient hulks, now transformed into floating jails,

but, somewhat exceptionally, in one of the prisons on the land. To get out would be difficult. The great thing was not to get back into it during the evening. As at that time the roadstead was almost deserted, it would hardly be impossible to swim across it. Indeed, he could never dream of leaving the arsenal otherwise than by sea. The shore once reached, he would leave it to his protector to come and help him.

Having been led by his thoughts to rely upon the stranger, he made up his mind to wait for his advice, and in particular to know whether the promises he had made to Romain would be confirmed. His very impatience made the time roll slowly on.

It was only after two days that he saw his mysterious friend reappear.

'Well?' asked M. Bernardon.

'It's all settled, sir, and as you want to help me I can tell you that it's all going well.'

'What do you have to give?'

'I've promised my comrade two thousand francs—a thousand when he gets out of prison—'

'He shall have them. And then?'

'A thousand francs cash down.'

'Here they are' and M. Bernardon produced the sum in question; the old convict conjured it away.

'Here' the Man from Marseilles continued. 'Here's some gold coins and a well-tempered file. That will be enough to get you out of your irons?'

'Yes, sir. Where will I be seeing you again?'

'At Cape Brun. You'll find me on the shore, at the bottom of the cove they call Port Mejean. You know it?'

'Yes—trust me.'

'When shall you be going?'

'This evening, swimming.'

'You're a good swimmer?'

'First rate.'

'Then that's all for the best. This evening, then.'

'This evening!'

M. Bernardon left the two convicts, who went back to their work. Without paying any more attention to them, the Man from Marseilles kept on walking for some time, asking questions here and there, and went out of the Arsenal without attracting any attention.

VI

JEAN MORÉNAS strove to appear the quietest of the prisoners, but in spite of his efforts, an attentive observer would have been struck by his unusual agitation. The love of liberty made his heart beat, and all his will-power was powerless to control his feverish impatience. How far it had fled, that surface resignation with which, over ten years, he had armoured himself against despair!

To hide his absence for a few moments when they went into the prison that night, he thought he could find one of his comrades to take his place. A convict wearing an *anklet*—that was what they called the light ring which prisoners of that degree wore on their leg—who, now having only a few days of his sentence to run, was not linked to anyone else—would be the man. He would enter into Jean's plans for three gold coins, and would agree to fasten the chain to his foot for a few minutes after it was cut through.

Shortly after seven that evening, Jean took advantage of a rest period to cut through his irons. Thanks to the high quality of the file, and although the fetter had been specially hardened, he accomplished this task fairly quickly. When the time came to go into the prison, the man with the *anklet* having taken his place, he crouched down behind a pile of timber.

Not far away was a huge boiler designed for a vessel then under construction. This great reservoir was standing on its base, and its fire-box offered the fugitive a safe shelter. Taking advantage of a favourable moment, he glided noiselessly into it, carrying with him a block of wood which he hollowed out to form a sort of helmet pierced with several holes. Then he waited, ear and eye alert, his nerves tense.

Night fell. The sky was obscured with clouds, and this deepened the darkness and favoured his plans. On the far side of the roadstead the St. Mandrier promontory vanished into the shadows.

When the Arsenal was deserted, Jean came out of his hiding-place, and, crawling very carefully, went towards the docks where the ships were careened. A few of the warders were moving about here and there, and at times he had to come to a halt and flatten himself down on the ground. Fortunately he had been able to break his chains, and this enabled him to move without making any noise.

At last he reached the water's edge, on one of the quays not far from an opening giving access to the roadstead. His helmet-like contrivance in his hand, he let himself down on a rope and beneath the waves.

When he returned to the surface he nimbly capped his head with that strange-looking helmet and completely vanished out of sight. The holes he had made allowed him to see where he was going, and he might well have been taken for a drifting buoy.

There suddenly came the noise of a cannon-shot.

'That's the harbour being closed' thought Jean Morénas.

A second shot sounded, and then a third.

He could not be mistaken: it was the alarm-gun. Jean realised that his escape had been discovered.

Taking care to keep clear of the ships and their anchor-chains, he went on into the small roadstead by the side of the Millau powder-magazine. The sea was a little rough, but he felt a strong enough swimmer to withstand it. Finding that his clothes hindered his progress, he let them drift away, keeping nothing but the purse of gold fastened on his chest.

He arrived without difficulty at the middle of the little roadstead. There, supporting himself on one of the iron buoys known as *dead men*, he carefully took off the helmet which had protected him and got back his breath.

'Ouf!' he meditated 'that little stroll is only a game compared with what I've still got to do. In the open sea I shouldn't be afraid of meeting anyone, but I've got to pass the harbour mouth, and there I'll find a fair number of ships going from the Grosse Tour to the Aiguillette Fort. It'll be the very devil if I dodge them . . . While we're waiting, let's see where we are, and don't let us plunge right down the wolf's throat like a fool.'

Having used the Lagoudron powder-magazine and the St. Louis Fort to give him his bearings, he again took to the water.

His head concealed in his contrivance, he swam very carefully. As the noise of the freshening wind might prevent his hearing other more dangerous sounds, he kept on the alert; important though it was for him to get out of the little roadstead, he moved but slowly, so as not to give the sham buoy that hid him an improbable speed.

Half an hour elapsed. By his reckoning, he must have got

near the channel when, to the left, he thought he could hear the sound of oars. He stopped, pricking up his ears.

'Ahoy!' someone shouted from a boat. 'Any news?'

'Nothing fresh' came the answer from another boat to the fugitive's right.

'We'll never be able to get him!'

'But are they sure he got away by sea?'

'Not a doubt about it! They've fished out his clothing.'

'It's dark enough for him to drag us out to the East Indies!'

'Oh well, let's get on with it. Give way, men.'

The boats moved further apart. As soon as they were far enough away, Jean chanced a few vigorous strokes, and made quickly for the harbour-mouth.

The nearer he got to it, the more the cries multiplied around him; the boats which were furrowing the roadstead of course had to concentrate all their efforts at that point. Without letting himself be scared by the number of his enemies, Jean went on swimming with all his might. He had made up his mind that he would drown himself rather than be recaptured, and that the hunters should never take him alive.

Soon the Grosse Tour and the Auguillette Fort came plainly into sight.

Torches were moving about along the dike and on the shore; the police were already afoot. The fugitive slowed down and let himself be carried by the waves and the west wind, which were sweeping him towards the sea.

The flare of a torch suddenly lit up the waves, and Jean saw four boats surrounding him. He did not stir; the slightest movement might betray him.

'Boat ahoy!' came a hail from one of the skiffs.

'Nothing!'

'On we go, then!'

Jean breathed again. The boats were going away. It was time, too. They had not been six strokes from him, and this had made him float upright in the water.

'Here! What's that down there?' shouted a sailor.

'What?' came the answer.

'That black spot that's floating along?'

'That's nothing. A drifting buoy.'

'Oh well, let's get hold of it.'

Jean got ready to dive. But then there sounded the whistle of a quarter-master.

'Pull, boys; we've got something else to do than to fish out a chunk of wood . . . Give way, all.'

The oars struck the water noisily. The wretched man regained his courage; his trick hadn't been discovered. Hope brought back his strength, and he pressed on towards the Aiguillette Fort, whose sombre mass was towering up before him.

Suddenly he found himself in deep shadow: some dark body was hiding the Fort from his eyes. It was one of the boats, which, rowing forward at full speed, had bumped up against him. The shock made one of the sailors lean over the gunwale. 'It's a buoy' he decided.

The boat went on, but unfortunately one of the oars, hitting against the false buoy, overturned it. Before the escaper could so much as think of diving out of sight, his closely-shaven head was visible above the water.

'We've got him!' shouted the sailors. 'Come on, boys!'

Jean dived, and while whistles were summoning the scattered boats from all around, he swam under water towards the Lazaret beach. This took him away from the rendezvous, for the beach was on the right of ships entering the large roadstead, while Cape Brun stretched out to their left. But he hoped to put his enemies on the wrong scent by making for the coast which least favoured his escape.

All the same, he would have to make his way to the place assigned by the Man from Marseilles. After making a number of strokes in the opposite direction. Jean Morénas doubled back. The boats were plying all round him, and to escape being seen he kept having to dive. At last his clever manoeuvres deceived his pursuers, and he succeeded in making progress in the right direction.

But wasn't he too late? Wearied out by this long struggle against men and the elements, Jean felt he was weakening. His strength was failing. More than once his eyes closed, and his mind grew dizzy; several times his arms grew slack, and his leaden feet dragged him down into the gulf.

By what miracle did he reach the shore? He did not know. Nevertheless, he reached it. Suddenly he felt solid ground beneath him. He stood up, made a few uncertain steps, turned about and collapsed unconscious, but out of reach of the waves.

When he returned to his senses, a man was bending over him and holding against his tightly-closed lips a flask from which trickled a few drops of brandy.

VII

THE COUNTRY to the east of Toulon, a region of woods and mountains furrowed by ravines and water-courses, offered the fugitive plenty of chances of escape. Now that he had reached the shore, he might hope to regain complete liberty. Reassured on this point, Jean Morénas felt a recurrence of the curiosity he felt for his generous protector. What the man's object was he could not imagine. Did the Man from Marseilles need some enterprising henchman, ready for anything, whom he had just chosen from among the prisoners? If so, he had made a bad guess. Jean Morénas had made up his mind to reject any suspicious-sounding proposal.

'Do you feel better?' M. Bernardon enquired, after having given the fugitive time to recover. 'Are you strong enough to walk?'

'Yes' Jean rose to his feet.

'Then dress yourself in these peasant's clothes that I've brought for you. Then let's be on our way! We haven't a minute to lose.'

It was eleven in the evening when the two men ventured into the countryside, keeping clear of the beaten paths, throwing themselves into ditches or under bushes when the sound of footsteps or a cart resounded in the midst of the silence. Although the fugitive's disguise made him unrecognisable, he feared any careful scrutiny, the Provençal garb he was wearing looking rather as though it had been borrowed from someone else.

In addition to the police, who would be on the alert as soon as the alarm was given, Jean Morénas had reason to dread any of the passers-by. Regard for their own skins, added to the charms of the prize-money awarded by the government for the capture of an escaped convict, would increase the keenness of their eyesight, the speed of their legs, the strength of their arms. Moreover, any fugitive risked

being recognized either because, accustomed to the weight of his irons, he dragged one leg slightly, or because of the anxiety visible in his face.

After a walk of three hours M. Bernardon gestured his companion to stop. From a haversack slung over his shoulder he took out some food, and this was hungrily wolfed down in the shelter of a thick hedge.

'Now sleep' ordered the Man from Marseilles, when the short meal was over. 'You've got a long way to go, and you must keep up your strength.'

Jean did not wait to be told twice; stretching himself out on the ground, he fell like an inert mass into a heavy sleep.

Day had broken when M. Bernardon aroused him, and at once they set off anew. It was no longer a matter of crossing the open fields. Not to seek concealment, though trying not to show themselves more than they had to, not to avoid being seen while striving not to let themselves be scrutinised too closely, to be obviously following the main roads, that would henceforth be the best thing to do.

They had gone some distance when Jean Morénas fancied he could hear the hoof-beats of several horses. He got up on a mound to glance down the road, but its curve kept him from seeing anything. Yet he could not have been mistaken. Crouching down, his ear close to the ground, he tried to make out the sound more clearly.

Before he could get up, M. Bernardon had leapt upon him. In a moment Jean found himself gagged and tightly bound.

At that moment two mounted gendarmes appeared on the road. As they reached the place where M. Bernardon was firmly gripping his bewildered prisoner, one of them shouted 'Here, you! What's the meaning of this?'

'It's an escaped convict, officer, an escaped convict whom I've just captured.'

'Oho! . . . The one that got away last night?'

'It could be. Anyhow, whether it's him or one of the others, I've got him.'

'A fat reward for you, friend!'

'And that's not to be sneezed at, not counting that his clothes aren't those of a jail-bird. Perhaps they'll give them to me into the bargain.'

'Do you want any help?' asked one of the gendarmes.

'My word, no! He's nicely trussed up, and I'll get him along all by myself!'

'That's the best thing' the gendarme agreed. 'Good-bye, then, and good luck!'

The gendarmes went off. When they were out of sight, M. Bernardon stopped in a thicket by the side of the way. In an instant Jean Morénas' bonds had fallen.

'Now you're free' his companion told him, pointing towards the west. 'Follow the road that way. If you keep your heart up you can be in Marseilles tonight. Look in the old harbour for the *Marie Magdeleine*, a three-master bound for Valparaiso in Chile. Her skipper knows all about it, and he'll take you on board. You're called Jacques Reynaud, and here's your papers under that name. You've got money. Try and make a new life. Good-bye.'

Before Jean Morénas had time to reply, M. Bernardon had vanished beneath the trees. The fugitive was alone on the roadside.

VIII

For a long moment Jean Morénas stood motionless, amazed at the outcome of this inexplicable adventure. Why, after helping him to escape, had his protector forsaken him? Why, above all, had this stranger interested himself in the fate of a convict to whom nothing special had drawn his attention? Who, at least, was he? Jean realised that he had not as much as thought of asking his benefactor's name.

But if there was no way of doing so now, this mattered little. The great thing was that he was no longer dragging behind him the irons which had crippled him so long. Sooner or later, everything else would be explained. Anyhow, the one thing certain was that he was alone on the verge of a deserted road, with money in his pocket, his papers all in order, and breathing into his lungs the intoxicating air of freedom.

Jean Morénas set off. He had been told to make for Marseilles. So it was towards Marseilles he went, without even thinking about it. But only to stop after the first few paces.

Marseilles, the *Marie Magdeleine*, Valparaiso, Chile, make a new life, all that was nonsense! Was it only to 'make a new life' in foreign lands that he had so much longed for freedom? No, no! During his long imprisonment, there was but one land he had dreamed of, St. Marie-des-Maures; and only one being in all the world, Marguerite. It was homesickness for his village and the memory of Marguerite that had made his captivity so cruel, his chains so heavy. And now he was to set off without so much as trying to catch a glimpse of them? Nonsense! Better to return and to bare his back to the jailors' whips!

No, to see his village once more, to kneel at his mother's grave, and above all, above all, once more to see Marguerite, that was what he must at all costs do. In her presence he would regain the courage which had hitherto failed him. He would talk to her, he would explain everything, he would prove his innocence. Marguerite was no longer a child; perhaps she would now love him. If so, he would persuade her to go away with him, and then what a splendid future 'would open before them'! If, on the other hand, she no longer cared for him, then what was to be would be. Nothing else would then have any importance.

Leaving the highroad, Jean took the first footpath which crossed it, making for the north. But soon he stopped again, made cautious by the sheer desire to succeed in his undertaking. He was too well acquainted with the country he was crossing, and where he had spent so much of his childhood, not to realise that the place he was making for was not so very far away. He could be at St. Marie-des-Maures within two hours. It was essential not to reach it before dark, or he would be arrested on the spot.

So Jean waited in the open country and only set out again at twilight, after a long sleep and a good meal at a wayside hostelry.

Nine was striking, and the darkness was complete, when he reached the village. He cautiously moved down the empty silent streets, without being seen by anyone, to Uncle Sandre's inn.

How was he to get in? By the door? Most certainly not. How was he to know whom he might find within, and whether, just behind the door, he might not run into some enemy? Anyhow, did the inn still belong to Marguerite?

Why; after so many years, might it not have passed into other hands?

Fortunately there was a better and more certain way of getting in than through the door.

It is not at all uncommon for the cottages in Provence to have secret entrances which enable their occupants to come and go without being seen. These 'tricks', more or less ingenious according to circumstances, were no doubt devised during the religious wars which reduced this region to blood and flames. Nothing more natural than for the people of those troubled times to look for some means of escape, if it were needed, from their enemies.

The secret of Uncle Sandre's inn, a secret quite unknown to its proprietor, Jean and Marguerite had discovered by sheer accident during one of their childish games. Proud of being the only ones to know it, they had taken care not to disclose it to anyone. When they had grown older they too had forgotten it, so completely that Jean could reasonably hope to find the mechanism still in working order now that he wanted to use it.

The secret lay in a movable back to the fireplace in the main room. As in many of the local buildings, this fireplace was very large, broad and deep enough—the tiny hearth took up only its centre—to shelter several people at once. Its back consisted of two great cast iron plates, parallel and separated only by a gap several inches wide. Both the plates were movable, and were pivoted to turn freely when a catch was manipulated correctly. This enabled anyone who knew their secret, for there was nothing to indicate its existence, to creep into the gap between them. Then having closed the one through which he had entered, he could half-open the other and get either in or out of the inn, as the case might be.

Jean went round the house; running his hand over the surface of the wall, he found the outer plate without over-much difficulty. A few minutes groping and he came across the catch, which he worked in the accustomed way. Certainly nothing had altered. The catch still worked, and the plate, with a heavy grinding sound, gave way beneath his thrust.

Jean got in through the gap; then, having shut the plate behind him, he regained his breath.

He now had to act even more carefully. A ray of light was filtering into the hiding-place round the edge of the inner

plate, and a sound of voices was coming from the room. So they weren't all asleep yet in the inn. Before showing himself he had to find out whom he was dealing with.

Unfortunately it was in vain that he tried to peer round the plate; he could see nothing. Then, wearied out, he decided to open it slightly whatever the risk.

At that very moment an uproar broke out in the room. It began with a heart-rending scream, an agonised cry for help, followed by a gasp; then there came a sound of panting, like the noise of a blacksmith's bellows, as though two men were struggling with one another, accompanied by the clatter of overturned furniture.

After a moment's hesitation, Jean gave a thrust to the catch. The plate swung round, revealing the whole length of the main room.

But just as he was going to dash out, he recoiled, terrified by the sight that met his eyes, into the protection of the shadows which filled the chimney and of the smoke from the odds and ends of firewood still smouldering on the hearth.

IX

AT THE great table in the centre of the room a man was sitting. Standing behind him, and making every effort to strangle him was another man. It was the former who, feeling himself gripped by the neck, had first screamed and then emitted these gasps. It was the latter from whose chest had come the raucous breathing of an athlete wearing himself out trying to overcome an adversary. During the struggle a chair had fallen over.

Before the seated man an ink-pot and some note-paper showed that he had been writing when his enemy had surprised him. Within reach of his hand, a wallet, lying half-open on the table, gave a glimpse of the papers that filled it.

The scene had lasted a minute at most, and it was already over. Already the man at the table had ceased to struggle, and nothing could now be heard but the panting of the murderer. What was more, the scene could not have lasted any longer. Somebody outside the room was astir. In a room on

the first floor, opening on to a gallery reached from the large room by a staircase, Jean could hear the sound of bare feet falling heavily on the tiling. Somebody was getting up. Another moment, and a door would open and some witness would appear.

The murderer realised the danger. His hands relaxed their grip, and as the victim's head fell inertly upon the table, they plunged into the wallet, from which they emerged clasping a bundle of bank-notes. Then the man leaped backwards and vanished into a small doorway opening beneath the stairs leading down into the cellar.

For a moment his face appeared distinctly in the light. It needed no more for Jean Morénas, alarmed and bewildered, to recognise him.

That man, it was the very same as he who had taken off the irons from the innocent convict, who had given him money. *Who* had taken such care of him and guided him across country to within a few miles of St. Marie-des-Maures. In vain had he taken off the false beard and the wig with which he had tried to disguise himself. There were the eyes, the forehead, the nose, the mouth, the build, and Jean could not be mistaken.

But the removal of the false beard and the wig had another result, more surprising and more disquieting still. In that man now that he had regained his normal appearance, in that man who had just been revealed as at once his rescuer and as an assassin. Jean was amazed to recognise his brother Pierre, who had vanished and whom he had not seen for so many years!

For what mysterious reason were his brother and his rescuer one and the same? By what chain of circumstances had Pierre Morénas come that very day to be in Uncle Sandre's inn? By what right was he there? And why had he chosen it as the scene of his crime?

These questions crowded tumultuously into Jean's mind. The very facts were to reply.

Hardly had the murderer vanished when the door on the first floor opened.

Upon the wooden gallery appeared a young woman; huddling against her were two children in their night-clothing and she held a much younger child in her arms. And, as Jean realised at once, it was Marguerite. Marguerite, and her children! . . . *Hers.* that was obvious! . . . Then she had

denied and forgotten the innocent man who far away had been enduring the torments of prison? The poor wretch at once realised the utter foolishness of his hopes.

'Pierre! . . . Oh, Pierre! . . .' the woman cried in a voice trembling with anxiety.

Then she suddenly caught sight of the body sprawled upon the table. 'Oh, my God!' she whispered, and she rushed down the stairs, her youngest child in her arms, the others in tears and following her closely.

She ran up to the murdered man, raised his head, and uttered a sigh of relief. She did not at all realise what had happened, but it was certainly not as bad as she had feared. The dead man was not her husband.

At the same moment somebody knocked roughly on the street door and voices could be heard outside. Fearing she knew not what, Marguerite recoiled towards the staircase, like an animal threatened by danger making for its lair. She stood there upon the bottom step, the two children hanging on to her petticoat, and the third still clasped firmly in her arms.

From that spot she could not see the cellar-door. She did not realise that it was gaping open and that Pierre Morénas, his face green with a bestial terror, was peering into the room. But Jean, on the other hand, could see everything: the dead man; Marguerite and her children recoiling in fear; Pierre, his own brother—an assassin!—skulking in his hiding-place and feeling the approaching threat of punishment following close upon his crime. The thoughts were whirling through his brain. He understood.

The fact that Pierre was there, the crime he had just committed, Uncle Sandre's unfinished accusation, lit up the past. Today's assassin was that of yesterday, and it was for his guilty brother that the innocent man had paid the penalty. Then, when time had weakened the memory of the crime, Pierre had returned, he had won the love of Marguerite, and for a second time he had destroyed the happiness of the wretch who had been driven to despair under the jailors' cruel strokes.

But there was to be an end of this! . . . Jean had only to say one word to overthrow this accumulation of crime and to avenge at one blow all the torments he had endured. One word? . . . Not even that! All he had to do was to keep quiet, to vanish as silently as he had come. The assassin could

never escape. He would be captured. Then he too would know what prison meant.

And then? . . .

Jean seemed to hear that word as clearly as if it had been ironically murmured into his ear. Yes, indeed, what then? . . . What would happen when both Jean and Pierre were clad in the livery of the jail? That would restore his lost happiness? Alas, Marguerite no longer loved him, and would she then love any the less that man who at this very moment was trembling in the most abject fright? For the unhappy woman loved him, and loved him with all her heart. Her voice, when she had uttered his name, had expressed all her love. She was indeed displaying it in her very attitude, as she stood there, clasping her children in her arms, barring the staircase with her body as though she were seeking to defend her home against some unknown but imminent peril.

And, anyhow, what would be the use? . . . Would revenge give him back an impossible happiness? It would save him from despair but would plunge Marguerite into it instead. Would not this be better: to leave to the woman whom he loved the illusion which made her life happy and to keep for himself the sorrow, all the sorrow to which, alas, he had so long been accustomed? How could he make a better use of his sad destiny? He was no longer, nor could he ever be, more than nothing. The way was closed before him and there was no longer anything to give him hope. What better use could he make of his useless life than to give it for the salvation of another, of another who already possessed his whole heart, whose life would be his life, whose happiness would be his own? . . .

But there came an uproar outside. The door was forced open. Half a dozen men rushed in, ran to the victim, and raised his head.

'*Bou Dioul!*' came an exclamation. 'It's Master Cliquet!'

'The lawyer!' somebody added.

They crowded round. Master Cliquet was laid upon the table. At once his chest began to rise and fall and a deep sigh came from his lips.

'Heaven help us!' exclaimed one of the peasants 'He isn't dead!'

They sprinkled the lawyer's face with cold water, and soon he opened his eyes. Jean gave a deep sigh. The murder had not been completed. The victim had survived, and it would

only be the prison for the murderer. He would have preferred the scaffold.

'Who was it did this to you, Master Cliquet?' asked a peasant.

The lawyer, who was painfully recovering his breath, made a gesture expressing ignorance. As a matter of fact, he had never seen his assailant.

'Let's look for him!' somebody suggested.

And, indeed, they would certainly not have long to look. The culprit was not far away, and, indeed, he was on the point of foolishly betraying himself.

Hoping to take advantage of the confusion to take to his heels, Pierre had opened more widely the door that concealed him, and already he had put one foot into the room, ready to make a dash for it. No doubt he would at once have been captured. And even if he had avoided this danger, there was another which he could not escape. He would certainly have had to go past Marguerite, who was standing as motionless as a statue. Then she would have realised everything.

But to save the culprit would be of little avail unless Marguerite's happiness were saved at the same time. For this, she would have to go on loving the man to whom she had given herself. She must be kept ignorant, must always remain ignorant . . . Who could say? Perhaps it was already too late . . . Perhaps suspicion had already been born behind that forehead which was paling as though from some mysterious fear . . .

Jean came suddenly out of the shadow cast by the mantelshelf and into the lighted room. Everybody recognised him at once: Pierre and Marguerite, who fixed on him eyes dilated with astonishment, and the five peasants, whose faces bore a mingled expression of sympathy born of old associations and the invincible horror which a convict always inspires.

'You needn't look' said Jean. 'It was I who did it.'

Nobody said a word. Not that they doubted him. The declaration had been too plausible; on the other hand, indeed, for someone who had killed once might kill again. But it was so unexpected that they seemed almost paralysed.

But now the scene had changed. Pierre, who had come out of the doorway, without any attention being paid to him, had gone across to Marguerite. But she did not seem to

notice that he was there. She had drawn herself upright, her face expressing mingled happiness and hatred. Happiness at seeing the destruction of the half-formed suspicion which had dawned upon her; hatred for the one whose confessed crime had inspired so abominable a thought.

It was Marguerite, it was she alone at whom Jean gazed.

The woman shook her fist at him.

' You scoundrel! ' she exclaimed.

Without replying, Jean turned away and held out his hands to be pinioned. He was dragged away.

The widely-opened door formed a dark rectangle, towards which he looked longingly. Upon that darkness appeared a picture, clearly set out, and at once cruel and lovely. It was, beneath a merciless blue sky, a quay scorched by the sunshine . . . And, upon that quay, there moved, laden with heavy burdens, a number of men with fetters upon their legs . . . But above them shone a dazzling figure, the figure of a young woman who held a little child in her arms . . .

His eyes fixed upon that figure, Jean vanished into the night.

AN IDEAL CITY

Although Jules Verne did not live in Amiens until after the madman's shot which crippled him in 1886, he had for some time been on friendly relations with the town. On 28th June, 1872 he became a member of the Académie des Sciences, des Lettres et des Arts d'Amiens, and later he became its Director.

As he declared himself too busy to make the usual address of a newly-elected member, the Academy's Council accepted with enthusiasm his proposal that instead he should be allowed to read them the first few chapters of his new book, '*Le Tour du Monde en Quatre-vingt Jours*'.

The following address, which appeared in the Academy's '*Mémoires*' for 1875, though not to be taken too seriously, shows, according to his biographer Marguerite de la Fuyë, 'a humourous and enlightened appreciation of urban problems'. It also shows his concern at the growing Americanisation of European life, and it gives some interesting sidelights—which, we may be sure, were not wasted on his audience—on contemporary conditions in Amiens.

His interest in town-planning is shown in his story '*The Begum's Fortune*'* (1879) as well as in the fantasy '*In the Twentieth Century*' which appears later in the present volume. As a member of the Amiens Town Council, to which he was elected in 1888, he was able to take part in that form of municipal service.

*Included in the Fitzroy edition of Jules Verne.

A PUBLIC LECTURE

Delivered by Jules Verne, Director, on 12th December 1875

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Will you permit me to neglect all the duties of a Director of the Academy of Amiens presiding at a public session, by replacing the usual lecture by an account of an adventure which happened to myself? I make my apologies in advance, not only to my colleagues, whose goodwill to me has never been lacking, but to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for being about to hear something you did not expect.

I was present, towards the beginning of last month, at the prize-giving day at the Lycée. There, without leaving my armchair, and guided by one of our colleagues, I made a tour of ancient Amiens. Of this excursion across the little industrial Venice formed north of the town by the eleven streams of the Seine, I retain only pleasant memories. I went home, I dined, I went to bed, I fell asleep.

Nothing out of the way in that, and quite likely on that day all the virtuous people in the town did the same, as it's the proper thing to do.

I usually get up early. But for some reason I cannot explain I did not wake up till quite late next day. The dawn had forestalled me. I must have slept eleven hours at least! What was the reason of this? I must have taken a sleeping-draught. Never have I closed my eyes during any official lecture whatever!

Whatever the reason, when I got up the sun had already crossed the meridian. I opened my window. It was fine weather. I'd thought it would be Wednesday! . . . It was obviously Sunday, for the boulevards were encumbered by a crowd of strollers. I dressed myself, I breakfasted in a trice and I went out.

All that day, Ladies and Gentlemen, to recall one of the first Napoleon's rare jokes, I was to 'march from surprise to surprise.'

You can judge for yourself.

Scarcely had I set foot on the pavement than I was assailed

by a crowd of urchins who shouted 'Competition programme! Fifteen centimes! Who wants a programme?'

'Me' I replied, without overmuch reflection that this expense had been rather thoughtless. On the previous evening I had indeed paid into the bank all my loose cash, and the price might risk ruining me.

'Well' I asked one of the urchins. 'What's it all about?'

'The regional competition, my prince!' came the reply. 'It ends today.' Whereupon they all scampered off.

But what was this competition? If my memory didn't betray me, it had been over two months ago! The urchin must have been playing me a trick.

All the same, I took things philosophically, and went on my way.

At the corner of the Rue Mercier, what was my surprise when I saw it stretching on out of sight! I could see a long line of houses, of which the furthest vanished over a rise in the ground. Could I be at Rome? Had a new suburb grown up, like a mushroom, with its mansions and churches, and that in the space of a single night?

It must be so, for I saw a bus, yes, a bus! —line F, to *Notre Dame aux Reservoirs*, going up the streets loaded with travellers!

I went on towards the bridge. A train passed me, going quite slowly. The driver rent the air with his whistle, and blew off steam with a deafening roar.

Did my eyes deceive me, but I fancied the carriages were of American type, with gangways to allow the travellers to go from one end of the train to the other! I tried to read the company's initials painted on the carriages, but instead of the 'N' of the Nord line, I saw the 'P' and the 'F' of Picardy and Flanders. What did this mean? Had the little company absorbed the big one, by any chance? Were we now going to have the carriages heated, even when it was cold in October, against all the company's rules? Were we going to have the compartments properly dusted? Were we going to be able to get return tickets, in fine weather, between Amiens and Paris?

Such was the first advantages I could imagine of the absorption of the Nord line by the P and F. But I could not think out anything so wildly improbable! I hurried on to the end of the bridge.

Here there had always been a beggar with a white beard

who used to take off his hat fifty times a minute. But he wasn't there!

I could have imagined anything but that, Ladies and Gentlemen, for he'd always seemed part of the bridge. Oh, why wasn't he there now, in his usual place? Two stone stairways had replaced the goat-paths which yesterday had led down to the gardens, and with the crowds who were going up and down, he'd have reaped a harvest!

The coin I'd meant to give him fell out of my hand. As it touched the ground it jingled, as if it had hit something hard and not the soft earth of the boulevard.

I looked down. A pavement, lined with slabs of porphyry, ran right along it.

What a change! So this corner of Amiens no longer deserved its reputation as the 'little Lutèce'?* What! you could now walk, even in the rain, without slipping in up to the ankles! You didn't have to paddle in that clayey mud which the natives so much detested?

Yes! It was with delight that I trod on that municipal pavement, wondering, Ladies and Gentlemen, if, thanks to some new revolution, the town mayors were nominated, since yesterday, by the Minister of Public Works.

And that was not all! That day the boulevards had been watered at a well-chosen hour—not too early, not too late—which didn't allow the dust to fly or the water to spread, just as the crowds were thickening! And these pathways, tarred like those of the Champs Elysées in Paris, were pleasant to walk upon! And there were double seats, with backs, between all the trees! And these seats were not dirtied by the thoughtlessness of the children and the carelessness of their nurses. And at every ten paces, bronze candelabras bore their elegant lanterns even among the leaves of the limes and the chestnut trees.

'Lord!' I exclaimed. 'If these lovely walks are as well lighted as they're kept up, if stars of the first magnitude are now shining in place of those yellowish glimmers of gas we used to have, then all is for the best in the best of possible towns!'

There was an enormous crowd on the boulevards. Splendid coaches rolled along the highway. I could scarcely get by. But—and this was strange, I could recognise among these

*The former name of Paris.—I. O. E.

magistrates, these merchants, these lawyers, these wealthy people, nobody whom I had had the pleasure of meeting at the music festivals; nobody among these officers, who were no longer of the 72nd regiment but of the 324th, wearing a new pattern of shako; nobody among these lovely ladies seated, so completely care-free, on armchairs with elastic seats.

And now who were these marvellous creatures who were showing off upon the footpaths, exhibiting, by the varieties of their *toilette*, the latest modes I'd seen in Paris? What bunches of artificial flowers, resembling real ones, and placed, maybe a little low, at the waist! What long trains, mounted on tiny metal wheels which murmured so pleasantly over the sand! What hats, with tangled lianas, arbore-scent plants, tropical birds, snakes and jaguars in miniature, of which even a Brazilian jungle would hardly give an idea! What hair-dos, so embarrassingly large and so heavy that they had to be supported on a little wicker cage decorated, however, in irreproachable taste! What hats, with such combinations of folds, ribbons and lace, that they'd be harder to put together than Poland herself! *

I stood there, unable to move! They passed in front of me like something out of Fairyland. I could see that there were no young men over eighteen years old, nor girls over sixteen. Nothing but married couples, affectionately linking their arms together, and a swarm of children such as had never been seen since the population began to multiply at the command of the Most High!

'Lord' I exclaimed again. 'If children can console one for anything then Amiens must be the city of consolations!

Suddenly strange sounds were heard. Trumpets sounded. I went to the worm-eaten platform which from time immemorial has trembled beneath the feet of the masters of music.

In its place there now rose an elegant pavilion, crowned with a light verandah, all very charming. At its foot spread broad terraces, leading down to the boulevard and to the gardens in the rear. The basement was occupied by a splendid café of ultra-modern luxury. I rubbed my eyes, wonder-

*Poland was then split—to all appearances irretrievably—between Russia, Germany and Austria; and the hats of the period seemed to have been called 'polonnaises'—I. O. E.

ing if, during the short space of a night, it had risen at the wave of a magic wand.

But I could no longer seek an explanation of inexplicable facts, which seemed to belong to the world of fantasy. The band of the 324th was playing a piece which did not seem human—or, for that matter, celestial either! Here everything had changed, too! Nothing musical in these phrases. No melody, no time, no harmony! The quintessence of Wagner? The algebra of sound? The triumph of discord! An effort like that of instruments being tuned in an orchestra, before the curtain rises!

Around me, the strollers, now grouped together, were applauding in a style which I'd seen only at gymnastic displays.

'But it's the music of the future?' I exclaimed in spite of myself. 'Have I left my own time?'

Certainly this seemed likely, for on approaching the notice which gave the names of the pieces, I read this bewildering title:

'No. 1: Reverie in a minor key on the Square on the hypotenuse!'

I began to get seriously uneasy. Had I gone mad? If I hadn't, wasn't I going to? I hastened away, my ears ringing. I needed air, space, the desert and its absolute silence! Longueville Place wasn't far away. I hurried off to this miniature Sahara! I ran . . .

It was an oasis. Great trees cast a refreshing shade. A carpet of grass extended beneath the clumps of flowers. The air was fragrant. A pretty little stream murmured through the greenery. The thirsty naiad of old now flowed with clear water. Without its overflows carefully controlled, its basin would certainly have flooded the town. It was neither fairy water, spun glass nor painted gauze. No! It was indeed the compound of hydrogen and oxygen, fresh drinkable water, and in it swarmed multitudes of tiny fish, which, only yesterday, would not have been able to live in it for an hour! I moistened my lips with this water, which hitherto had defied all analysis. If it had been sweetened, Ladies and Gentlemen, in my state of excitement I should have found this quite natural!

I threw a last glance at this clear naiad, as one might look at something phenomenal, and set off towards the Rue des Rabouissans, wondering if it were still in existence.

And there, on the left, rose a great building of hexagonal form with a fine entrance. It was at once a circus and a concert-hall, large enough to enable a dozen orchestras—including the Municipal Band of the Volunteer Firemen—to play together.

In that room a vast crowd were applauding enough to make it collapse. And outside was a long queue, down which spread waves of enthusiasm from within. At the door appeared gigantic notices, bearing this name in colossal letters:

PIANOWSKI

Pianist to the Emperor of the Sandwich Islands

I KNOW neither of that emperor nor of his virtuoso in ordinary.

‘And when did Pianowski come?’ I asked a dilettante, recognisable by the extraordinary development of his ears.

‘He didn’t come,’ the native looked at me rather surprised.

‘Then when will he come?’

‘He isn’t coming’ the dilettante replied. And this time he had an air of saying, ‘But you, where did you come from?’

‘But if he isn’t coming, when will he give this concert?’

‘He’s giving it now.’

‘Here?’

‘Yes, here, in Amiens, and at the same time in London, Vienna, Rome, St. Petersburg, and Pekin!’

‘Well’ I thought ‘all these people are mad! Have they, by any chance, let loose the inmates of the Clermont Mental home?’

‘Sir’ I continued.

‘But, sir,’ the dilettante replied—shrugging his shoulders. ‘Just read the notice! You’ll see that this is an electrical concert!’

I read the notice, and indeed at that very moment the famous ivory-pounder was playing in Paris; but by means of electric wires his instrument was linked up with the pianos

of London, Vienna, Rome, St. Petersburg, and Peking. So, whenever he struck a note, the identical note resounded on the strings of these distant pianos, the keys being instantaneously depressed by the electric current!

I wanted to go into the hall. It was impossible! Well, I don't know if the concert was electric, but I could certainly take my oath that the spectators were electrified.

No, no, I could not be in Amiens! It was not in this wise matter-of-fact city that such things happened! I wanted to be clear about this, so I hurried along down what must be the Rue des Rubuissons.

Was the Library still there? Yes, and in the middle of the courtyard the marble statue threatening all the passers-by who didn't know their grammar!

And the Musée? It was there! With its crowned 'N' which still obstinately appeared beneath the municipal attempts to scrape it off.

And the abode of the General Council? Yes, with its monumental door through which my colleagues and I were accustomed to pass on the second and fourth Fridays of every month.

And that of the Prefecture? Yes, with its tricolour flag gnawed by the winds of the Somme Valley as if it had been to the front with the gallant 324th!

I could recognise them! But how they'd altered! The street had a spacious air of being a second Boulevard Haussemann! I was uncertain, I did not know what to believe . . . But at the Place Périgord doubt was no longer possible.

A sort of flood seemed to have invaded it. Water was spurting from the paving stones as though some artesian well had instantaneously opened beneath it.

'The town mains!' I exclaimed 'The town mains which burst here every year with mathematical regularity! Yes, I must be in Amiens, at the very heart of the old Samarobrive!

But then what had happened since yesterday? Whom could I ask? I didn't know anyone! I was like a stranger. But it was impossible that here, in the Rue Trois Cailloux I shouldn't find someone to talk to!

I went up the Rue Trois Cailloux towards the station. But—

What was this I saw?

On the left a magnificent theatre, set apart from the ad-

joining houses, with a broad façade of that polychromatic architecture now so unfortunately come into fashion. A peristyle, comfortably arranged, giving access to stairs which led up to the hall. No more of those inconvenient barriers, of those narrow labyrinthine corridors which last night had been only big enough to hold a public, alas too few! As for the old room, it had vanished, and its debris had no doubt been sold on the secondhand market like relics of the stone age!

Then, as I turned my back on the theatre, on the corner of the Rue des Corps-nuds-sans-tête, a dazzling emporium met my eyes. Shop-front in carved wood, Venetian glass protecting a splendid window-display, expensive trinkets in copper or enamel, tapestry, procelain which looked quite modern, although it was exhibited there like the products of the most venerable antiquity. This store was a real museum, with a Flemish cleanness, without a single spider's web in its windows, without a single grain of dust on its floor. Along the façade, on a plate of black marble, in lapidary letters, extended the name of a famous second-hand shopkeeper of Amiens, a name quite inconsistent with his usual line of commerce, which consists of selling broken flower-pots!

A few symptoms of madness began to arise in my brain. I could not bear to see more of this. I took to flight. I went across the Place St. Denis. It was ornamented with two dazzling fountains, and its age-old trees threw their shadows on a plaque green with the patina of time.

I rushed up the Boulevard St. Michel. I glanced at the clock on the station. It was only three quarters of an hour slow. Progress, eh! And I dashed like an avalanche into the Rue de Noyon.

There were two buildings that I didn't know, that I couldn't recognise. On one side I could see the home of the Industrial Society, with its buildings already old, hurling out through a tall chimney steam which was no doubt driving the mechanical compositors dreamed of by one of our wise colleagues. On the other side rose the Post Office, a superb building which contrasted strangely with the damp dark shop where, last night, I had succeeded in stuffing a letter through one of those narrow windows so likely to give one a crick in the neck.

This was a last blow directed against my poor brain! I made off up the Rue St. Denis, and past the Palais de

Justice. Incredible—it was completely finished, but the Court of Appeal was still being held amidst the scaffolding.

I reached the Place St. Michel. Peter the Hermit was still there, calling us to some new crusade! I threw a sideways glance at the cathedral . . . The bell tower on the left wing had been repaired, and the cross on the tall spire, at one time bent by the western gales, stood up with the rectitude of a lightning conductor . . . I hurried on to the open space before the cathedral. It was no longer a narrow blind alley between squalid hovels but a large square, well-laid out, surrounded by fine houses, which allowed it to show at its best that superb specimen of the thirteenth century Gothic art.

I pinched myself hard enough to draw blood! A cry of pain escaped my lips to prove that I was still awake. I looked in my pocket-book, to verify the name on my visiting cards. It was my own! So I was really myself, and not a gentleman who'd come direct from Honolulu to fall right into the capital of Picardy?

'Let's see' I told myself, 'I mustn't lose my head! Either Amiens has changed greatly since I was here last, or I'm not in Amiens! Go along with you! . . . What about the burst pipe in the Place Périgord?—So the Somme is only a couple of steps away, and I'll go . . . The Somme! But if someone told me that it flows nowadays into the Mediterranean or the North Sea, I shouldn't have the right to be surprised!'

At that moment I felt a hand laid on my shoulder. My first idea was that I'd been recaptured by my keepers. No! I realised it was a friendly grasp.

I turned round.

'Well, good morning, my dear patient' came the affectionate voice of a portly gentleman, with a round smiling face. He was dressed in white, and I'd never seen him before.

'Well, sir, to whom do I have the honour of speaking?' I asked, determined to make an end of it.

'What, you don't recognise your own doctor?'

'My doctor was Dr. Lenoel' I replied, 'and I . . .'

'Lenoel!' exclaimed the man in white. 'Really, my dear patient, have you gone mad?'

'If I haven't, sir, you have' I replied. 'So you can decide which it is!'

I must have been honest to let him choose!

He looked at me attentively. "Um" he said, his cheerful

face clouding over. 'You don't seem too well. But, never mind, never mind. I've the same interest as yourself in keeping you healthy! It's no longer as things were in the time of Dr. Lenoel and his contemporaries, worthy physicians to be sure . . . But we've made progress since then!'

'Oh!' I replied. 'You've made progress . . . So now you heal your sick?'

'Our sick! Have we had any sick since France adopted the Chinese system! Now it's just as if you were in China.'

'In China! That wouldn't much surprise me!'

'Yes, our patients pay us their fees only so long as they keep well! When they aren't the cash-box shuts! So isn't it to our own interest to see they never get ill? So, no more epidemics, or hardly any! Everywhere a flourishing health that we tend with pious care, like farmer keeping up his farm. Illness! But with this new system that would ruin the doctors—and on the contrary, they're all making their fortunes!'

'Is it the same for the lawyers?' I asked, smiling.

'Oh, no! You'll understand that there wouldn't be any trials, whereas, whatever one does, there are still a few small ailments . . . especially among close-fisted people who want to economise on my fees!—Look here, my dear patient, what's wrong with you!'

'Nothing's wrong with me.'

'You can recognise me now?'

'Yes,' I replied, so as not to contradict this strange doctor who might possibly be able to use it against me.

'I'm not going to let you get ill,' he continued, 'for that would ruin me—Let's see your tongue.'

I showed him my tongue and I really must have put on a pitiful expression.

'Um, um,' he murmured, after examining it with a lens. 'Tongue coated!—Your pulse!'

I resignedly let him feel my pulse.

My doctor took from his pocket a tiny instrument I've heard mention of recently: putting it on my wrist, he obtained on squared paper a graph of my pulse-beats which he read easily, like a post office clerk reading a telegraphic message.

'The devil!' he said.

Then, producing a thermometer from nowhere, he stuffed it into my mouth before I could stop him.

'Forty degrees!' he exclaimed. (A hundred and four fahrenheit).

And as he mentioned that figure he turned pale. His fees were plainly in danger.

'Well, what have I got?' I asked him, still half suffocated by the unexpected introduction of that thermometer.

'Um! um!'

'Yes, I know that answer, but it's one fault is that it isn't precise enough. Well, what I've got, doctor, I'm going to tell you. I feel that I'm going off my head.'

'Before the proper time, my dear patient!' he replied pleasantly. To reassure me, no doubt.

'Don't laugh!' I exclaimed. 'I can't recognise anybody—not even you, doctor! I feel as if I'd never seen you before!'

'Well, well! You see me once a month, when I come to collect my little fees!'

'No, no. And I'm beginning to wonder whether this town is Amiens, and this street is the Rue de Beauvois!'

'Yes, my dear patient, it is Amiens. Oh, if you'd got the time to climb up the cathedral spire, you'd soon recognize the capital of our dear Picardy, defended by its ring of forts. You would recognise these charming valleys of the Somme, the Arne, the Selle, shadowed by these lovely trees which don't bring in five sous a year, but which our generous *aediles* keep up for us! You would recognize these outer boulevards, which cross the river on two splendid bridges and make a green belt round the city! You would recognise the industrial town which since the citadel was pulled down has sprung up so quickly on the right bank of the Somme. You would recognise that broad thoroughfare, called the Rue Tourne-Coiffe! You would recognise . . . But after all, my dear patient, I don't want to contradict you if it amuses you to say we're in Carpentras, right down in the south of France!'

I could plainly see that this worthy man was taking care not to contradict me openly—of course, you have to humour maniacs!

'Doctor' I said 'listen to me . . . I'll gladly take anything you prescribe . . . I don't want to rob you of my money! . . . But let me ask you one question.'

'Ask, my dear patient.'

'Is today Sunday?'

'The first Sunday in August.'

'What year?'

'The onset of madness characterised by loss of memory he muttered. 'That'll take a long time.'

'What year?' I insisted.

'It's the year ...'

But just as he was going to tell me I was interrupted by noisy shouts.

I turned round. A troop of loungers had surrounded a man; he was about sixty years old and looked very strange. This personage walked as though he were scared and hardly seemed able to keep on his feet. Anybody would have said that half of him was missing.

'Who's that man?' I asked.

The doctor, who had taken my arm, was saying to himself. 'We've got to take his mind off his monomania, so that ...'

'I asked who that fellow is, and why that crowd is following him!'

'That fellow! What, you're asking me who he is? But he's the one and only bachelor left in the Department of the Somme!'

'The last?'

'Not a doubt about it? And you can see how they're hooting him!'

'So now it's forbidden to be a bachelor?' I asked.

'Almost, since they've been taxed. The older they get, the more they have to pay, and unless they manage to settle down that will ruin them in no time! That poor wretch you saw has had a largish fortune completely swallowed up.'

'So he's got an unconquerable aversion for the fair sex?'

'No—the fair sex have got an unconquerable aversion for him. He's missed three hundred and twentysix chances of getting married.'

'But still there are some girls to be married, I suppose?'

'Very few, very few. No sooner do they reach marriageable age than they're married!'

'What about widows?'

'Oh, widows! They don't even give them time to recover. Before ten months have elapsed, off to the Hotel de Ville. Just now, I'm certain, there aren't twentyfive widows available in France!'

'But the widowers?'

'Oh, them, they can take their time! They're free from

compulsory service, and they've nothing to fear from the tax-collectors!'

'Now I understand why the boulevards are crowded with couples, young and old, conscripted under the cloak of marriage!'

'Which has often been a flag of revenge, my dear patient!'

I could not keep back a shout of laughter.

'Come along, come along' he said, grasping my arm.

'One moment—Doctor, we really are in Amiens, I suppose?'

'There, its taken hold of him again' he muttered.

I repeated my question.

'Yes, yes, we're in Amiens!'

'What year?'

'I've told you already, in . . .

The sound of a triple whistle cut short his words. It was followed by a loud blast like a foghorn. A gigantic vehicle appeared down the Rue de Beauvois.

'Stand clear, stand clear!' the doctor shouted, pushing me to one side.

And I fancied he added between his teeth 'Now all it needs is for him to break a leg! I'll end up having nothing in my pocket.'

It was a tramcar. I hadn't so far noticed that steel rails furrowed the street, and I must say I thought this innovation quite natural, although at present there's no more chance of a tramway than there is of a bus!

The doctor beckoned to the conductor of the great vehicle, and we took our places on the platform, already crowded with travellers.

'Where are you taking me?' I asked, quite resigned, by now, to let things happen.

'To the regional competition.'

'At the Hotoie?'

'At the Hotoie.'

'So we really are in Amiens?'

'Of course.' The doctor threw an anxious glance at me.

'And what's the present population of this town since they started taxing bachelors?'

'Four hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants.'

'And we're in the year of grace?'

'In the year of grace . . .'

Another blast on the foghorn kept me again from hearing the reply which would have interested me so much.

The vehicle had turned into the Rue du Lycée and was making for the Boulevard Cornuau.

As we passed the College, whose chapel already looked like an ancient monument, I was struck by the number of pupils who were coming out for their Sunday walk. I couldn't keep myself from showing a little surprise.

'Yes, four thousand of them!' the doctor commented. 'It's quite a regiment!'

'Four thousand!' I exclaimed. 'Well! And in this regiment how many show their ignorance of the classic tongues?'

'But, my dear patient' the doctor replied. 'Do call to mind your own experience. It's a hundred years, at least, since Latin and Greek were given up in the Lycées! Education is now purely scientific, commercial, and industrial!'

'Can it be possible?'

'Yes, and you know well enough what happened to that unfortunate pupil who carried off the last prize for Latin verse? Well, when he appeared on the platform somebody threw a Latin grammar at his head, and amidst all the excitement the Prefect was so embarrassed he almost bit him!'

'And since then, no more Latin verse in the colleges?'

'Not even half a hexameter!

'And Latin prose was banned at the same time?'

'No, two years later, and with good reason!' Do you know how, at the examination, the best of the candidates translated '*Immanis pecoris custos*!'

'No.'

'Like this, 'guardian of an immense blockhead.'

'Go along with you!'

And '*Patiens quia aeternus*? '†

'I've no idea.'

'He is "patient because he sneezes"! So the president of the university realised it was high time to suppress the study of Latin.'

My word, I shouted with laughter. Even the doctor's expression could not stop me. It was clear that to his mind my madness was taking on an alarming character. Complete

* A keeper of gigantic cattle.'

† He is patient because he is eternal.'

loss of memory on the one hand, and tempestuous maniacal laughter on the other! Now he'd got something to be concerned about!

And indeed my laughter might have continued indefinitely if the beauty of the scene hadn't diverted my attention.

We were going down the Boulevard Cornuau, now straightened, thanks to an amiable understanding between the Authorities and the Trades Unions. To the left rose the St. Roch Station. This building, after being so strangely knocked about during the works of construction; now seemed to justify that line of Delille's:

'It's indestructible mass has wearied time!'

The tram-rails stretched on down the centre of the boulevard, shadowed by a fourfold line of trees that I'd seen planted. And now they seemed to have lived two centuries.

In a few seconds we'd arrived at the Hotoie. What changes had been sundered by this fine walk where in the fourteenth century the youth of Picardy used to show off. It now displayed great stretches of lawn in the English fashion, large clumps of shrubs and flower-beds which disguised the rectangular form of the spaces reserved for the annual exhibitions. A re-arrangement of the trees which yesterday were choking one another had given them space and air, and now they could rival the gigantic 'Wellingtonias' of California.

There was a crowd at the Hotoie. The programme hadn't deceived me. Here the Regional Competition of Northern France displayed a long series of stables, stalls, tents, kiosks of every colour and every shape. But today the Agricultural and Industrial Fair had closed. Within an hour the prize-winners—two-footed or four-footed—were to be 'crowned.'

I didn't find the competition displeasing. It appealed to eyes and ears alike. The strident clatter of moving machinery, the hissing of the steam, the plaintive bleating of the sheep penned in their stalls, the deafening cackle of the poultry-yard, the speeches of the authorities whose pompous sentences resounded from the platform, the applause given to the prize-winners, the soft sound of the kisses which official lips placed upon their 'crowned' heads, the martial orders which echoed under the tall trees, and finally the vague murmur which rose from the crowd, all this combined to produce a strange concert whose charm I greatly appreciated.

The doctor pushed me through the turnstile. The hour

was coming when the Ministerial Delegate would make his speech, and I didn't want to lose a word of this harangue which, if only it followed the current of progress, ought to be so new in substance and style.

I therefore hurried into the centre of a large quadrilateral reserved for the machinery. My doctor bought at a high price several bottles of a precious liquid which had the quality of disinfecting the local water. I let myself be tempted by several boxes of a phosphorescent paste which had so completely destroyed the mice that the cats had taken their place.

Then I could hear some complicated pianos which harmoniously reproduced all the strains of an orchestra from the opera. Not far away were some stone-crushers thunderously crushing stones. The harvesters were reaping the corn-fields like a barber shaving a stubbly chin. Pile-drivers, worked by compressed air, were striking five-million-pound blows. Centrifugal pumps were working as though they meant to absorb, with a few strokes of a piston, the whole of the Selle river, reminding me of Moreau's lovely verse about the Voulzie:

' A thirsty giant would drink it in a breath! '

Then on all sides there were machines of American origin, carried to the last extremes of progress. One was given a live pig, and out of it came two hams, one York and one Westphalian! To another was offered a rabbit, still quivering, and it produced a silk hat! This one absorbed an ordinary fleece and ejected a complete suit of clothes in the best style! That one devoured a three-year-old calf and reproduced it in the twofold form of a smoking *blanquette* of veal and a pair of newly-polished shoes! And so on and so forth.

But I could not stop to contemplate these wonders of human genius. Now it was my turn to drag the doctor along. I was intoxicated.

I reached the platform, which was already sagging under the weight of the important personages.

They had just been judging the fat men—as is done in America at every competition which takes itself seriously.

After the fat man's competition came that of the thin woman, and the prize-winner as she came down from the platform, her eyes modestly lowered, repeated that watchword of one of our wittiest philosophers. ' They like the fat woman, but they adore the thin ones! '

Now it was the turn of the babies. There were several hundred of them among whom those awarded a prize were the heaviest, the youngest, and the one who could bawl loudest! All were plainly dying of thirst and were calling for a drink in their own way, which was not at all pleasant.

'Lord' I exclaimed, 'there won't be enough wet-nurses for ...'

The sound of a steam-whistle interrupted me.

'What is it?' I asked.

'It's the suckling-machine starting to work' explained the doctor. 'It's equivalent to five hundred Norman wet-nurses! You well understand, my dear patient, that since celibacy was abolished, they had to invent suckling by steam!'

The three hundred babies had vanished. Their deafening cries were followed by a religious silence.

The Ministerial Delegate was about to close the competition with a speech.

He advanced to the edge of the platform. He began to speak.

My stupefaction which so far had kept on growing, now went beyond the limits of the impossible.

Yes, everything had changed in this world. Everything had followed the line of progress! Ideas, customs, industry, commerce, agriculture, all had been transformed!

Only the opening words of the Delegate's speech remained what they had always been—what they will always be at the opening of any official harangue!

'Gentlemen' he said. 'It is always with renewed pleasure that I find myself once more ...'

Thereupon I made a brusque movement. I fancied that my eyes were opening in darkness ... I stretched out my hands ... I unconsciously upset my table and my lamp ... The noise woke me up ...

All that was nothing but a dream!

Some well-informed scientists declare that dreams, even those which seem to last throughout a long night, only last, in reality, a few seconds.

It may seem like that to you, ladies and gentlemen, this ideal walk, which, maybe under too fantastic a form, I've just made in a dream through Amiens ... in the year 2000!

TEN HOURS HUNTING

Concerned because Jules Verne seemed to be impairing his health by over-work, his cousin Georges Allotte de la Fuy  invited him to go out on a duck-shooting expedition.

'You know quite well' Verne replied 'that the only thing I ever brought down was a gendarme's hat in 1859. I'll let it rest at that'.

'Open the "Magasin d'Education et de Recr ation" and you'll see that Jules has none of the huntsman's interests' added his father—and he read out from 'The Wilderness of Ice'* a passage in which its hero, Dr. Clawbonny, implored his two companions not to shoot the hares which gambolled so trustfully at their feet.

The gendarme's hat episode, whether actual or otherwise, presumably inspired the following 'simple boutade', as Jules Verne called it. It appeared in the 'M moires de l'Acad mie d'Amiens' for 1881, and was afterwards included, presumably as a 'filler', at the end of his rather silly love-story, 'Le Rayon Vert'.†

*Included in the Fitzroy Edition of Jules Verne

†Included in the Fitzroy Edition as 'The Green Ray'

A MERE FROLIC

THERE ARE people who don't like huntsmen, and perhaps they're not altogether wrong.

Is it because it doesn't disgust these gentry to kill the game with their own hands before they eat it?

Isn't it rather because the said huntsmen are too eager to describe their prowess, in season and out of season?

I'm inclined to think so.

Well, about twenty years ago, I myself was guilty of the first of these misdeeds. I went hunting! Yes, I went hunting! . . . So, by way of punishing myself, I'm going to be guilty once again, by relating in detail my adventures as a huntsman.

May this story, sincere and truthful, give people like me a lasting disgust for setting out across the fields, led by a dog, a game-bag on their back, a cartridge belt round their waist, a shotgun under the arm! But I didn't count upon it much, I have to admit. Anyhow, at all costs, here I go.

II

SOME ECCENTRIC philosopher said somewhere—'Never have a country-house, or a chaise, or horses . . . or a hunt! There'll always be friends who'll take the trouble to have them for you!'

It was by applying this axiom that I was invited to my first feat of arms in the preserves of the Department of the Somme without being their owner.

If I'm not mistaken, this was towards the end of August in 1859. A prefectorial decree had just fixed the opening of the hunting season for the next day.

In our little town of Amiens, where there isn't any small

shopkeeper or lowly artisan who doesn't own some sort of gun, with which to rove along the highways of the neighbourhood—for six weeks ahead, at any rate, that solemn day had been impatiently waited for.

The professional sportsman, who thinks there's nobody like him, as well as the sharpshooters of the third and fourth rank, the marksmen who fire without taking aim as well as the third-class shots who take aim without ever killing, and even the duffers, not a whit less diligent than the huntsmen *de primo cartello*, make ready with a view to the opening, equip themselves, lay in a supply of food, get into training, thinking only to think quail, talking only to talk hare, dreaming only to dream partridge! Wife, children, family, friends, all are forgotten! Politics, art, literature, agriculture, trade, all are obliterated by the preoccupations of that great day, with which they dazzle themselves, these fanatics of what the immortal Joseph Prudhomme* thought he could call a 'barbarous amusement!' Well, it chanced that among the handful of friends I have in Amiens, one was a devoted sportsman, a fine fellow, although a bureaucrat. But if he said he had a touch of rheumatism when it was a question of going to the office, he soon found himself back on his feet when a week's holiday enabled him to be at the opening.

This friend was called Brétignot.

A few days before the great day, Brétignot came to find me—me who wasn't doing any harm.

'You haven't ever hunted?' he asked me in that supercilious tone which includes two portions of benevolence to eight of disdain.

'Never, Brétignot' I replied, 'and I've never even thought...'

'Well, come to the opening with me' he told me. 'In Hérisart we've got 250 acres reserved, and it swarms with game. I've got the right to invite a friend. So I'm inviting you and I'll take you there.'

'Well...' I hesitated.

'You haven't got a gun?'

'No, Brétignot, and I've never had one.'

'That doesn't matter, I'll lend you one—a muzzie-loader,

*The general term applied to sententious members of the bourgeoisie.
—I. O. E.

its true, but all the same it'll bowl over a hare at two dozen paces!'

'Provided I hit it!' I reminded him.

'Of course—It'll suit you quite well.'

'Too well, Brétignot!'

'But, my word, you haven't got a dog!'

'Oh, that doesn't matter, so long as one goes with the gun... That'll be a double job.'

My friend Brétignot stared at me superciliously. That fellow doesn't like jokes about anything connected with hunting! That's sacred, that is!

However, he stopped knitting up his brows.

'Well, will you come?' he asked.

'If you insist' I replied, without the slightest enthusiasm.

'Yes... Oh, yes!... It's a thing you've got to see, at least once in a lifetime. We'll go on Saturday evening. Remember, I'm relying on you.'

And that was how I embarked on this adventure, whose unhappy memory still lingers.

Still, I must admit that the preparations didn't alarm me. I didn't lose any hours sleep over them. Moreover, if I must admit everything, the demon of curiosity was pricking me. Was it really so interesting, this opening? Anyhow, I promised myself, if not to do anything else, at least to watch those oddities the huntsmen as well as the hunt. If I agreed to burden myself with a weapon, it was simply so as not to cut too bad a figure in the midst of these Nimrods, whose mighty deeds my friend Brétignot had invited me to witness.

I must add, however, that although Brétignot lent me a gun, a powder-flask, and a bagful of shot, there was still the matter of the game-bag. So I had to go shopping for such a commodity, which most of the huntsmen can manage quite well without. I searched for a second-hand one. Fruitless. Prices had been rising. They'd all been taken. I had to buy a new one, but on the express understanding that they'd take it back from me—at fifty per cent less—provided it were still in good condition.

The shopman looked at me, smiled, and agreed.

That smile didn't seem to forbode anything good.

'After all' I said 'Who knows?'

Oh, vanity!

III

ON THE assigned date, the night before the opening, at six in the evening, I was at the rendezvous Brétignot had fixed on the Place Périgord. There I climbed, the eighth if you don't count the dogs, into the body of the coach.

Brétignot and his fellow-hunters—I daren't yet reckon myself among them—were superb in the traditional uniform. Splendid fellows, though a little unusual to look at: some of them serious as they waited for the morrow; the others cheerful, already ravaging with their mouths all the preserves of Hérissart village.

Among them were six of the most distinguished 'guns' of the capital of Picardy. I hardly knew any of them. So my friend Brétignot introduced us formally.

The first was Maximon, a tall dry fellow, the pleasantest of men in ordinary circumstances, but ferocious as soon as he had a gun under his arm—one of those huntsmen who'll kill one of his companions sooner than return empty. He, Maximon, never spoke: he was absorbed in his lofty thoughts.

Next to that important person was Duvauchelle. What a contrast! Duvauchelle, short, fat, between fiftyfive and sixty years old, deaf enough not to hear his own gun going off, but who only too fiercely claimed the results of every disputed shot. So he had more than once shot a hare that was already dead with an unloaded gun—one of the mysteries of hunting which will liven up conversation for six months in the clubs or at the dinner table.

I had also to endure the mighty grip of Matifat, great at recounting *cyngeetical* exploits. And what interjections! What onomatopoeia! The call of the partridge, the barking of the dogs, the gun-shots! Bang! Bang! Bang! Three bangs for a double-barrelled gun! Then, what gestures! The hand moving like a yawing boat to imitate the zigzags of the game, the back crouching to take a better aim, the left arm held out while the right arm goes to the chest to show the gun being brought to the shoulder! And how they fall, the creatures of fur and feather! What hares knocked head over heels! He never missed any of them!—Huddled in my corner, I just escaped being killed by one of his gestures!

But what you ought to hear was Matifat gossiping with his friend Pontcloué. Both hand in glove, but that didn't keep

them from unceremoniously shutting each other up, for fear that one should set foot in another's preserves.

'How many hares I killed last year,' Matifat began, while the vehicle jolted on towards Hérissart, 'the ones I killed can't be counted!'

'Well, that's like me!' I thought.

'And what about me, Matifat' Pontcloué retorted. 'Don't you remember the last time we went hunting all over Argoeuves? Those partridges!'

'I can still see the first which had the good luck to fly clean through my bunch of shot.'

'And I can see the second—its feathers were so knocked off there was nothing left but skin and bone!'

'And the one which my dog couldn't find in the furrows where it must have fallen!'

'And the one which I had the cheek to fire at from over a hundred paces, but I'm certain I hit it all the same!'

'And that other one which my two shots—bang! bang! bang! I was knocked over into the grass, but my dog only made one mouthful of it!'

'And that flock which flew off as I was reloading my gun! Whirr! Whirr! Oh, what hunting, my friends, what hunting!'

And reckoning it up on the quiet, I soon saw that of all those partridges of Pontcloué and Matifat, not one had found its way into the game-bag. But I dared not say anything, for I'm very timid when I'm with people who know more about it than I do. Anyhow, if it was only a matter of not bringing down any game—Good Heavens, I'd have done as well myself!

As for the other huntsmen, I've forgotten their names; but if I'm not mistaken, one of them was nicknamed Bacara, because whenever he went hunting he 'always fired and never hit.'

And, indeed, who knows if I wasn't going to deserve that name? Come on then! I was getting ambitious. I was longing for tomorrow.

IV

IT CAME, that morrow. But what a night in that Hérissart inn! Only one room for eight! Mere litters, on which we

could have had a more rewarding hunt than on the local preserves! Horrible parasites, fraternally shared with the dogs who were lying beside the beds and who scratched themselves until the floor shook.

And there was I, who'd naïvely asked our hostess, an old lady of Picardy with an untidy shock of hair, if there were any fleas in our room!

'Oh, no!' she'd told me. 'The lice eat them!'

Whereupon I'd decided to sleep, fully dressed, in a rickety chair which creaked at every movement. So I felt rather washed out when daylight came.

Naturally I was the first up. The others were still snoring. I was in a hurry to be out and about, like all inexperienced sportsmen, who want to set off at dawn, even before breakfast. But the masters of the art—whom I respectfully woke one by one—calmed the neophyte by grumbling at his impatience. They knew, the rascals, that at daybreak the partridges, whose wings are still wet with dew, are very hard to approach, and that once they fly away they don't easily decide to come back to the coverts.

So we had to wait until the tears of dawn had been drunk up by the sun.

At last, after a hasty breakfast, followed by the usual morning drink, we left the inn, rubbing our joints; then we made for the plain, where the preserves begin.

Just as we got to their boundary, Brétignot, drawing me aside, told me 'Keep your gun pointing downwards, muzzle towards the ground, and try not to kill anybody!'

'I'll do my best,' I replied without committing myself, 'but the same applies to you, doesn't it?'

Brétignot shrugged his shoulders disdainfully and there we were hunting—just as we liked, each as he pleased.

This is fairly nasty country, that Hérissart, whose complete bareness doesn't justify its name.* But it didn't seem to be as rich in game as Mont-sous-Vaudret, whose 'depths' are very rich, and where 'there's hare there,' as Matifat put it, and where they'd been seen, Pontcloué added, 'more than twelve to a dozen.'

With the prospect of getting in some good shooting, all these fine fellows were in excellent humour.

So on we went. Splendid weather. A few sunbeams were

*Which means roughly 'bristling.'—I. O. E.

piercing the morning mists, whose spirals were forming on the horizon. Cries, pipings, cluckings everywhere. Birds, rising straight from the furrows, soared up into the sky, like helicopters whose springs are suddenly released.*

More than once, unable to control myself, I'd brought my gun to my shoulder. 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' That was friend Brétignot, who was watching me without seeming to.

'Why not? Aren't they quail?'*

'No! Skylarks! Don't shoot.'

It goes without saying that all the others had more than once looked at me askance. Then they had prudently kept clear with their dogs, who, with noses down, were trotting about quartering the grass and clover and furze, their tails raised and quivering like question-marks—without my being able to reply.

I felt that these gentlemen didn't care to stay within the danger-zone of a novice, whose gun made them uneasy for their skins.

'Blazes! Look out for your gun!' Brétignot warned me as he moved aside.

'Well, I'm not looking out for it worse than anybody else!' I answered, somewhat annoyed at this plethora of advice.

For a second time Brétignot shrugged his shoulders and went off to the side. As I didn't want to be left behind, I hurried on.

V

I HAD got back to my companions but so as not to frighten them, I shouldered my gun, butt upwards.

How resplendent they looked, these professional hunters, in their shooting-kit—a white waistcoat, baggy trousers with velvet down the seams, big nailed shoes whose soles made flanges round the uppers, linen leggings over wool stockings, preferable to thread or cotton, which quickly begin to chafe—as I soon found out for myself. I did not cut such a figure in my hired outfit, but nobody expects a beginner to have the wardrobe of an experienced comedian.

*Not the anachronism it seems! These were tiny models, probably worked by elastic.—I. G. E.

As regards the game, for example, I could see nothing. All the same, that preserve was full of quail, partridge, corn-crakes, and those January hares which my companions called the 'three quarters', and of which they had their mouths full, then leverets, then doe-hares. I had to believe this, because they said so.

'And anyhow' my friend Brétignot told me. 'Take care not to shoot the does when they're "full". It isn't sporting.'

'Full' or 'empty', devil take it if I could see one, I who knew enough to distinguish a hare from an alley-cat—even in a stew.

'And another bit of advice—it might be important if you should start a hare.'

'If there is one' I replied rather nastily.

'There'll be one' Brétignot assured me coldly. 'Well, remember that because of its build a hare runs faster up a slope than down. You've got to allow for this in taking aim.'

'You were right to tell me, my friend' I replied. 'That advice won't be wasted, and I promise you I'll take advantage of it.'

But inwardly I reflected that even going down hill that hare would run faster than my murderous lead could catch it up!

'Come on, come on!' Maximon adjured us 'We're not here to train beginners to shoot small fry!'

A dreadful man! But I dared not reply.

Before us, to right and left, a broad plain stretched out of sight. The dogs had gone on ahead. Their masters had spread out. I did all I could not to let them get out of sight. One idea kept on worrying me, that my comrades, practical jokers by temperament, would play some trick on me that my inexperience justified. I recalled the cheerful story of a novice whose friends told him to fire on a toy rabbit sitting up in a thicket, and ironically beating a drum! I should die of shame after a trick like that!

Yet we went on at random, following the dogs across the stubble so as to reach a ridge which stood out a few kilometers away, its crest lined with shrubs.

Whatever I could do, these walkers, used to the difficult surface of the marshes and furrowed land, kept getting ahead of me, so much so that I was completely outdistanced. Brétignot himself, after having slowed down so as not to abandon me to my sad fate, had speeded up, wanting to help

get in the first shots. I don't grudge you that, friend Brétignot! Your instinct, rather than your friendship, spurs you irresistibly on! And soon all I could see of my comrades was their heads, like so many aces of spades, appearing above the bushes.

All the same, two hours after leaving the inn at Hérissart, I hadn't heard even one shot fired—no, not one! What bad tempers, what recriminations, what grumbling, this promised, if when we got back our game-bags were as empty as when we set out!

But who would believe it? It was to me that there fell the chance of firing the first shot. In what circumstances I'm ashamed to say.

Dare I admit it? My gun wasn't ever loaded. The beginners' carelessness? No! Just a matter of pride. As I feared carrying out this operation very clumsily, I wanted to wait until I was all alone to do it. So, where nobody could see me, I opened my powder-flask; I emptied into the left barrel a charge kept in place by a mere paper wad; and on top of this I put in a good measure of shot—more rather than less. Who knows? One shot extra and perhaps I shouldn't go back empty-handed! Then I rammed and rammed enough to burst my gun and then—and how rash!—I crowned with its cap the nipple of the barrel I'd just loaded.

This done, the same performance for the right barrel. But while I was ramming, what a bang . . . The gun went off. The whole of the first charge shaved my face! . . . I'd forgotten to lower on to the cap the hammer of the left barrel, and some shock had made it fall!

Warning to beginners! I almost announced the opening of the hunting season in the Somme by a regrettable accident. What a scoop for the local papers!

And yet if, when that shot went off by inadvertence, if—yes, the idea struck me!—if any game whatever had been going by in that direction, I should certainly have brought it down! And that might be a chance I'd never get again!

VI

MEANWHILE BRÉTIGNOT and his comrades had reached the ridge. There they stopped and argued about what was to

be done to banish this bad luck. I caught up with them, after re-loading my gun—very carefully this time.

It was Maximon who speaks to me, but in rather a haughty tone, as befits a master: 'You fired?' he says.

'Yes . . . that is . . . yes . . . I fired!'

'A partridge?'

'A partridge!'

Nothing in the world would have induced me to admit my clumsiness before that Areopagitica.

'Well, where's your partridge?' he asked, prodding my empty gamebag with the end of his gun.

'Lost!' I replied recklessly. 'What do you expect? I haven't got a dog! Oh, if only I'd had a dog!'

Really, with a little cheek, you can't fail to be a real huntsman!

Suddenly the interrogation I'm being put through was brusquely interrupted. Pontcloué's dog had just put up a quail, less than ten paces away. Involuntarily, by instinct, if you like, I shouldered my gun . . . 'and bang!' as Matifat says.

What a kick I got, through not having shouldered it properly—like a slap which can't be returned to anybody! but my shot had at once been followed by another, that of Pontcloué.

The quail fell, riddled with shot, and the dog took it to his master, who put it in his game-bag.

They didn't even have the grace to admit that I might have had a hand in this massacre. But I didn't say anything. I didn't dare. I'm well known to be naturally timid with people who know more about it than I do!

But, my word, this first success had given these crazy game-slayers an appetit! Just think of it! After three hours hunting, one quail between seven hunters! Now, it was unthinkable that in this rich Hérissart country there wouldn't be at least another. So, if we managed to kill it, that would make about a third of a quail for every gun.

After crossing the ridge, we found ourselves on those abominable tilled fields. But for me, these furrows which make you take wearisome strides, these lumps of mud between which the foot twists aren't at all pleasing, and I much prefer the asphalte of the boulevards.

Our party, with its pack of hounds, went on another two hours without seeing anything. Already frowns were appear-

ing. A sort of fierce irascibility kept breaking out for any reason or none, against a clot over which somebody stumbled, against a dog which got in somebody's way. Unmistakable signs of a general bad temper.

At last a number of partridges appeared over a beetroot field forty paces off. I daren't say that it could be called a covey, or a company reduced to its last stragglers.

To tell the truth, it consisted of only two.

That didn't matter. I fired 'into the brown' and this time my shot was followed by two others. Pontcloué and Matifat had been 'talking powder' at once.

One of the wretched birds dropped. The other flew away at full speed and settled a good half-mile away, behind a rise in the ground.

Oh, you curséd partridge, what disputes you did give rise to! What arguments between Matifat and Pontcloué! Each claimed to have done the deed! So what bitter retorts! What wounding innuendoes! And the adjectives! . . . Grabber! . . . There's only him, of course! Devil take people who haven't any shame! . . . It's the last time they'll go out together! . . . And other compliments even more stinging, which my pen refuses to write.

The truth is that both these gentlemen had fired at once.

There had indeed been a third shot, which had preceded the two others. But—this was unworthy of being discussed—was it thinkable that this partridge had been brought down by myself? Just think of it, a mere novice!

So, in the quarrel between Pontcloué and Matifat I dared not intervene, even with the generous idea of getting them to agree. And if I didn't claim the bird, it's because I'm naturally timid . . . You know the rest of it.

VII

AT LAST, to the great relief of our stomachs, noon came. We stopped at the foot of a slope, in the shadow of an old elm. The guns and game-bags—still almost, alas, empty—were put on one side. Then lunch to restore a little of the strength so fruitlessly expended since we set out.

On the whole a sad meal! More recriminations than mouthfuls! Horrible country! . . . Well-preserved, this hunting! . . . The poachers have laid it waste . . . They ought to be hung on a tree with a label on their chests . . . Hunting's getting impossible! . . . Another two years and there won't be any game left . . . Why not prohibit it for a few years? . . . Yes! . . . No! . . . In short, the whole litany of hunters who haven't shot anything since dawn.

Then the old argument broke out again between Ponticloué and Matifat regarding that ambiguous partridge they both claimed. The others got dragged into it . . . I thought they'd end by coming to blows.

At last, an hour later, we were again on our way—having fed and whetted our whistles, as they say in these parts. Perhaps before dinner we'd be luckier. Where is the true hunter who doesn't keep at least a vestige of hope until the time when he means to forsake the partridge, wanting to get home to spend the night with his family?

So there we were, off again. The dogs, almost grumbling like ourselves, had gone ahead. Their masters shouted after them in horrible tones like orders given on an English ship.

I followed rather unsteadily. I was beginning to feel knocked up. My game-bag, empty as it was, seemed to weigh down on my hip. My gun, unbelievably heavy, made me long for my walking-stick. The powder-flask, the bag of shot, I'd gladly have given to one of these country boys who followed me rather scornfully, wanting to know what I'd shot 'on four legs'. But I dared not, for *amour propre*.

Two hours, two mortal hours, flowed on. We'd done ten miles on our feet. What seemed clear enough to me was that what I'd bring home from this excursion would be not a half-a-dozen quails but a crick in the back.

Suddenly some rustling noise startled me! This time it was really a covey of partridges rising above a bush. General broadside! Fire at will! Fifteen shots at least rang out, and mine was one of them.

Then a cry was heard in the midst of the smoke! I stared . . .

Suddenly a face appeared above the bush.

It was a peasant, his right cheek as swollen as if he'd got a coconut in his mouth.

'Oh, well! An accident!' exclaimed Brétignot.

'It only needed that!' retorted Duvauchelle.

And that was all they had to say about this 'infliction of blows and injuries, without the intention of slaying' as the Code Napoleon puts it. And these men, devoid of bowels of compassion, ran after their dogs, which were bringing them two partridge—only wounded, but they soon finished them off with their boots. I wished as much for them—if ever they needed to be finished off!

And all this time the native was there with his swollen cheek keeping him from speaking.

But here were Brétignot and his comrades coming back.

'Well, my poor fellow, what is it?' Maximon asked him in reassuring tones.

'Blazes! He's got a charge of shot in the jaw' I told him.

'Bah! That's nothing!' Duvauchelle retorted 'that's nothing!'

'Yes! Yes!' the peasant was apparently emphasising the importance of his wound by making a horrible face.

'But who's been clumsy enough to risk the life of this poor devil?' Brétignot asked, with an enquiring glance that ended by resting on myself.

'Didn't you shoot?' Maximon asked me.

'Yes, I shot . . . like everybody else!'

'Well, that settles it!' Duvauchelle exclaimed.

'You're as wretched a hunter as Napoleon the First!' commented Pontcloué, who detests the Empire.

'Me! Me!' I exclaimed.

'It can't be anybody but you!' Brétignot told me severely.

'Certainly this gentleman is a dangerous fellow!' Maximon continued.

'And when he's still a novice' Pontcloué added 'he'd better refuse invitations that lead to this sort of thing.'

Thereupon all three moved off.

I understood. They'd left me the victim to settle up with.

I settled up. Taking out my purse, I offered ten francs to this good peasant, whose cheek deflated at once. He must have swallowed his nut.

'That's better?' I asked him.

'Oh, oh! it's started again' he replied, blowing out his left cheek.

'Oh, no!' I told him. 'No, one cheek's enough for this time.'

And I moved away.

VIII

WHILE I was disentangling myself from this wretched country bumpkin, the others had gone on ahead. Certainly they had made me realise that they didn't feel safe in the neighbourhood of anyone so clumsy as myself, of whom common prudence told them to keep clear.

Severe but unjust, Brétignot himself forsook me, as if I'd been a witch endowed with the evil eye. Soon they had all vanished behind a little bush on the left. To tell the truth, I wasn't at all sorry. At any rate, henceforth I'd only be responsible for what I did myself!

So I was left alone, alone in the middle of this interminable plain. What had I come here to do, good Lord, with all this harness on my back! Not a partridge to invite a shot from my gun. Not an 'are' as the peasants of Picardy might say, which I could make a 'cast after', a word of huntsman's slang. Instead of being peacefully at home in my study, reading or writing, or simply doing nothing at all!

I walked on at random. I followed the beaten paths in preference to the tilled land. I sat down for ten minutes. I walked on for twenty. Not a house for the next three miles. Not a steeple pointing towards the horizon. It was a desert. From time to time a notice threatened trespassers with this cryptic inscription. 'Shooting preserved.'

Preserved? Not the game, to be sure, as there wasn't a trace of any.

At last I wandered on, dreaming, philosophising, rifle slung, dragging my legs. The sun couldn't set behind the horizon quickly enough for me. Could some modern Joshua, suspending the cosmographical laws, have stopped it in its daily course to please my fanatical companions? Would night never bring this wretched day to an end?

IX

BUT THERE is an end to everything—even to game preserves. I caught sight of a wood where the plain ended. Half a mile more and I should have reached it.

I walked on without hurrying. The half mile was covered. I reached the edge of the wood.

Far away, very far away, explosions rang out, like the crackle of fireworks on 14th July.

'They're slaughtering them!' I reflected. 'They're plainly not going to leave any for next year.'

And then—this shows what we are!—I got the idea that I might have more luck within the woods than in the open country. In the tops of the trees were some of those unoffending sparrows that the better class restaurants serve up, nicely spitted, under the name of 'larks.'

So there I was following the glades which open off the main road.

The demon of hunting had certainly taken possession of your humble servant! Yes, no longer carrying my gun slung over my shoulder, I'd carefully loaded it, I'd got ready to fire . . . I kept looking anxiously to left and right.

Nothing! The sparrows had no doubt taken refuge in the Paris restaurants and were lying low. Once or twice I took aim . . . It was only the leaves moving on the trees, and certainly I was not going to let myself open fire on the leaves!

It was just five. I knew that within fifty minutes I'd be back at the inn where we were to dine before entering the vehicle, which, beasts and men alike, living and dead, was to take us all back to Amiens.

So I went on down the broadest of the glades which diverged towards Hérissart, my eye continually on the look out.

Suddenly I halted . . . My heart was beating a little faster!

Beneath a shrub, about fifty paces off, between the brambles and the undergrowth, there was certainly something.

It was blackish with a silvery edge and one point of vivid red like a glowing pupil staring at me!

To be sure, some sort of furred or feathered game—I couldn't be certain which—had taken refuge there. I was doubtful whether it were a hare, three quarters grown at least, or a hen pheasant. Well, why not! This would greatly raise me in my comrades' estimation if I took home the plump body of a pheasant.

So I advanced towards it cautiously, ready to raise my gun. I was excited, yes, as much excited as Duvachelle, Maximon and Brétignot put together!

At last I was well within range—about twenty paces—

kneeling on the ground so as to take a better aim. My right eye well open, the left eye well closed, the target well centred in the sights. I corrected my aim and fired.

'Hit!' I shouted, beside myself. 'And this time nobody's going to argue about whose it is.'

Indeed, I'd seen some feathers flying—or rather some tur—before my very eyes.

Not having a dog, I dashed toward the bush, I hurled myself on this game, which gave no signs of life. I picked it up...

It was a gendarme's cocked hat, embroidered with silver, with a tricolour cockade, whose red centre had seemed to be looking at me like an eye!

What luck that it hadn't been on its owner's head when I opened fire!

Just then a tall body, stretched out on the grass, raised itself.

Terrified, I recognised the blue trousers with their red stripe, the dark tunic with its silver buttons, the swore' belt and the yellow shoulder-belt of Pandore, whom my unlucky shot had just aroused.

'So now you're shooting at policeman's hats?' he said with that characteristic official accent.

'Gendarme, I assure you...' I babbled.

'And what's more, you've hit it right in the cockade!'

'Gendarme... I thought... it was a hare!... Just a mistake!... Anyhow, I'll pay!'

'You certainly will!... And it's quite dear, a gendarme's hat is... especially if you fire on it without a licence!'

I turned pale. All my blood rushed to my heart. That was the real trouble.

'You've got a licence?' Pandore demanded.

'A licence?'

'Yes, a licence! You know what a licence is?'

Well, no, I haven't got a licence! For one day's hunting I'd thought I could do without it. But I felt I'd better say what one always says on such occasions, that I'd forgotten my licence.

An incredulous smile of disdainful superiority spread over the face of this representative of the law.

'Then I'll have to summons you!' he told me in the gratified tones of a man who foresees a reward for bringing in a culprit.

'Why? I'll bring it to you tomorrow, officer . . .'

'Yes, I know all about that' Pandore replied 'But I've got to summons you.'

'Oh, all right, summons me, as you've no mercy for a beginner.'

A gendarme who had mercy wouldn't be a gendarme. He took from his pocket a note-book with its yellowish parchment covers.

'Your name . . .?' he asked.

So there! I was not unaware that it's usual, in such grave circumstances to give the law a friend's name. If, at that time, I'd had the honour of belonging to the Academy of Amiens perhaps I shouldn't have hesitated to give the name of one of my colleagues. But I contented myself with giving that of one of my old school-friends of Paris, a very talented musician. At that moment, no doubt, the good fellow was plunged in his four-finger exercises, never suspecting that an action was being brought against him for breaking the game laws!

Pandore carefully wrote down the name of his victim, his age, his profession, his address. Then he asked me very politely to entrust him with my gun—which I made haste to do. Anyhow, it would be less to carry. I asked him to include the game-bag, the shot, and the powder-flask among the things he confiscated; but he refused with a regrettable disinterestedness.

There still remained the question of the hat. This was settled on the spot at the price of a gold piece, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

'It's a pity' I told him, 'that the hat was in such good condition!'

'It was almost new!' Pandore replied. 'I bought it, six years ago, from an N.C.O. who was just going to retire.'

And after putting it back on his head as regulations commanded, the majestic gendarme, swinging on his haunches, went his way, and I went mine.

An hour later I reached the inn, covering up as best I could the disappearance of the confiscated gun, and saying not a word about my misadventure.

Let me add that my companions had brought home a quail and two partridges among seven. As for Pontcloué and Matifat they were estranged until death by their dispute;

what was more, blows had been exchanged between Maximum and Duvauchelle on account of a hare which is running yet.

XI

SUCH WAS the series of emotions I suffered on that memorable day. Maybe I'd shot a quail, maybe a partridge, maybe I'd wounded a peasant, but undoubtedly I'd peppered a gendarme's hat! Caught without a licence, I'd had a summons laid against me, though under somebody else's name! I'd deceived the authorities! What else could happen to an 'prentice huntsman to make a good start to his career?

It goes without saying that my friend the pianist was disagreeably surprised when he received a summons to appear before the court at Doullens. I found out later that he hadn't been able to produce an alibi. So he was sentenced to a fine of sixteen francs, plus the same amount as expenses.

I hasten to add that some time afterwards he received by post, with the word "Restitution", a postal-order for thirty-two francs which covered his outlay. He never knew where that came from, but he still bears the sign of guilt on his brow, and he is 'known to the police.'

XII

I DON'T like huntsmen, as I said at the outset, especially when they tell you their adventures. Well, I've just told you mine. Please forgive me. It won't happen again.

This expedition will be the author's first and last, but he's got a memory of it which amounts to bad feeling. So whenever he sees a huntsman following his dog, and with his gun under his arm, he never fails to wish him good luck, for the saying goes that 'this brings him bad luck!'

FRRITT-FLACC

*Greatly influenced though he was by the work of Edgar Allan Poe, Verne wrote very few occult or 'horror' stories. Here is one of the exceptions, which appears to have been suggested by Poe's 'William Wilson.'**

It first appeared at the end of one of its Author's longer stories, 'Un Billet de Loterie', published in 1886. The two had nothing in common, and 'Frritt-Flacc' may have again been inserted as a 'filler'. The translation originally appeared in the American periodical 'Fantasy and Science-Fiction.'

**Another is 'Master Zacharius, or the Clockmaker who lost his soul' included in this edition as part of the collection 'Dr. Ox and Other Stories.'*

I

Frritt! That is the wind getting up.

Flacc! That is the rain falling in torrents.

Its roaring force is bending the trees on the adjacent hills and driving on to break against the slopes of the mountains of Crimma. And all along the coast, the towering cliffs are ceaselessly gnawed by the waves of that mighty sea, the Megalocride.

Frritt! Flacc!

Far back in the harbour is hidden the small town of Luktrop: a few hundred houses with greenish verandahs which protect them—or fail to protect them—against the winds from the open sea. Four or five sloping streets—ravines rather than streets—paved with pebbles and smirched with the ashes hurled from the eruptive cone not far inland—the Vanglor. In the daytime, the volcano throws out dust from its depths, dust which spreads to form a sulphurous smoke. During the night, from minute to minute, it vomits flame. Like a lighthouse five hundred kerts away, the Vanglor gives warning of the port of Luktrop to the coasters and native craft whose prows furrow the waters of the Megalocride.

On the far side of the town stand some ruins of the Crimerean period. Then comes a suburb with rather an Arabian appearance: a casbah with white walls and a rounded roof, built on the sun-scorched terrace. A pile of stone cubes thrown at random. A regular heap of dice whose corners have been rounded off by the attrition of time. 44-5

Among the local sights may be noticed the Six-Four, a strange square-shaped building with six openings on one street side and four on the other.

A belfry dominates the town, the square belfry of the St. Philfelène, with its bells suspended in the embrasures of its walls. Sometimes the bells jangle in a strong gale. A bad omen. Then the countryside grows ap-^{er}ehensive.

Such is Luktrop. Beyond come the houses—miserable huts scattered about the countryside, among the broom and

heather, like those in Brittany. But this is not in Brittany. Is it in France? I do not know. In Europe? I cannot say.

At all events, you need not look for Luktrop on the map—not even in the most up-to-date atlas.

II

FROC! A discreet knock has sounded on the narrow portal of the Six-Four, which stands on the left-hand corner of Messaglière Street. It is one of the most comfortable houses in Luktrop—if indeed that word is known in Luktrop. One of the richest, if to gain a few thousand fretzers constitutes wealth.

The *froc* was replied to by one of those savage barks in which is mingled a howl—what the bark of a wolf might be. Then a sash window is opened above the doorway of the Six-Four.

'Devil take the beggars!' comes an evil bad-tempered voice.

A young girl, shivering in the rain and wrapped in a tattered cape, asks if Doctor Trifulgas is in.

'He is or he isn't—it's all according!'

'I've come from my father—he's dying!'

'Where's he dying?'

'On the slope of the Val Karniou, four kerts away.'

'And what's his name?'

'Vort Kartif.'

III

A HARD man, this Doctor Trifulgas. Not at all compassionate, and responsive only to cash, paid in advance. His old Hurzof—a cross between a bull-dog and a spaniel—had more heart than he. Moreover, he had his scale of fees, so much for typhoid, so much for a stroke, so much for pericarditis and the other ailments which doctors invent by the dozen. The miserable Vort Kartif was a poor man, with a wretched family. So why should Doctor Trifulgas put himself out on such a night?

'Only having got me out of bed,' he muttered to himself as he lay down again; 'that's worth ten fretzers already.'

Scarcely twenty minutes had elapsed when the knocker banged again at the narrow portal of the Six-Four.

Cursing, the doctor left his bed and leaned out of the window.

'Who's there?' he cried.

'I'm the wife of Vort Kartif.'

'That good-for-nothing at Val Karniou?'

'Yes, and if you don't come, he'll die!'

'Then you'll be his widow!'

'Here's twenty fretzers.'

'Twenty fretzers, to go four kertsess off to Val Karniou!

'For heaven's sake!'

'Go to the devil!'

And again the window slammed shut. Twenty fretzers! A fine reward! To risk getting a cold or stiff joints for twenty fretzers, especially when next day he was expected at Kiltrenø by the rich gouty Edzingov, whose gout he was exploiting at fifty fretzers a visit!

And with that agreeable prospect before him, Doctor Trifulgas went back to bed.

IV

FRRITT! FLACC! . . . and then *Froc! Froc! Froc!*

The three blows of the knocker were this time struck with a firmer hand. The doctor was asleep. He awoke, but in what a temper! The window opened and the storm entered like a volley from a machine-gun.

'I'm from the good-for-nothing!'

'That wretch again?'

'I'm his mother!'

'I hope his mother his wife, and his daughter will all perish with him!'

'He's had a stroke—'

'Then let him ward it off!'

'We've brought some money,' the old woman replied. 'If you don't come, my grand-daughter will lose a father, my daughter will lose a husband, and I—I shall lose a son!'

It was at once pitiful and terrible to hear the voice of the old woman, to think that the wind must have frozen the blood in her veins, the rain have soaked right through her thin flesh to her very bones.

'A stroke? That's two hundred fretzers' replied the heartless Doctor Trifulgas.

'We've only got a hundred and twenty!'

'Good evening!' And once more the window slammed shut.

But on reflection . . . A hundred and twenty fretzers for a walk of an hour and a half, then half an hour to make the visit, that would make sixty fretzers an hour—a fretzer a minute. A trifling profit, but not to be disdained.

Instead of going back to bed, the doctor put on his clothes, slid into his huge thigh-boots, wrapped himself in his great-coat, and thrust his hat on his head and his gloves on his hands. He left his lamp burning beside his *materia medica*, open at page 197. Then, emerging from the portal of the Six-Four, he paused on the threshold.

The old woman was there, leaning on her stick, emaciated by her eighty years of poverty.

'The hundred and twenty fretzers?'

'Here they are, and may God repay you a hundred-fold!'

'God! Has anybody ever seen the colour of His money?'

The doctor whistled to Hurzof, thrust the lantern into the dog's mouth, and took the road beside the sea.

The old woman followed him.

V

WHAT A weather of *frritts* and *flaccs*! The bells of Philfélène were jangling in the gale. A bad omen. Bah! Doctor Trifulgas is not superstitious. He has no faith in anything, not even in his own science, except for what he can get out of it.

What weather, and what a road! Pebbles and volcanic ash, the pebbles slippery with seaweed, the ashes crackling like a slag. No light except for the lantern carried by the dog Hurzof, dim and flickering. Now and then a jet of flame from the volcano, in the midst of which grey wan shadows

seem to appear . . . Nobody knows what really lies in the depths of that bottomless crater—perhaps the souls of some subterranean race, which vaporise as soon as they emerge.

The doctor and the old woman follow the slope of the shore. The sea is wet with a livid wetness, a mournful white; it gleams as it gnaws away at the shore with a phosphorescent line of breakers, which seem to cast luminous worms on the beach.

They go on together, to the turn of the road between rolling dunes, on which the broom and the rushes clash together like the rattle of bayonets.

The dog has come closer to its master and seems to be saying: ' Well! A hundred and twenty fretzers to put in the strong-box! That's the way to make a fortune! A few more acres to add to the vineyard! An extra course for the evening meal! An extra morsel for the faithful Hurzof! Take care of the wealthy invalids and bleed them—in the purse! '

Then the old woman stops. With her trembling finger she indicates a reddish light in the shadows. It is the house of the good-for-nothing Vort Kartif.

' There? ' asked the doctor.

' Yes,' replies the old woman.

' *Harraouah*,' growls the dog.

Suddenly the volcano thunders; shaken in the very foundations at its base, the ground trembles violently. A jet of lightning-like flame leaps to the zenith, piercing the clouds. The concussion hurls Doctor Trifulgas to the ground.

He swears like a Christian, staggers to his feet and stares.

The old woman is no longer with him. Has she vanished into the earth, or has she flown away into the swirling mists?

As for the dog, he is still there, rearing up on his hind legs, his jaws open, the lantern out.

' Let's get on,' murmurs the doctor.

The honest man has received his hundred and twenty fretzers: he has to earn them.

VI

NO MORE than a glimmer, half a kertse away. It is the lamp of the dying man— or maybe of the corpse. That must be

the house—the old woman has pointed it out. No chance of any mistake.

Amidst the *frritts* whistling and *flaccs* pattering in the up-roar of the storm, Doctor Trifulgas hurries on.

As he draws near he can see the house more clearly, standing alone in the bare countryside. It is strange to see how closely it resembles the home of the doctor, the Six-Four in Luktrop. The same pattern of windows in front, the same little arched door.

Doctor Trifulgas hurries as fast as the storm will let him. The door stands half-open; he has only to push it; he pushes and enters and the storm shuts it behind him—violently.

The dog Hurzof, left outside, is howling but falls silent at intervals, as choir-boys do between the verses of a psalm.

It is strange! Anyone would think that Doctor Trifulgas has got back to his own dwelling. But he has not gone astray. He has not turned aside. He is undoubtedly at Val Karniou, not in Luktrop, yet here is the same corridor with its low vaulted ceiling, the same wooden stairway with its handrail worn by the grasp of many hands.

He goes up. He reaches a landing. In front of a door, a light gleams faintly, as at the Six-Four.

Is it hallucination? In the dim light he recognises his own room with its yellow settee: on the right, an antique pearwood chest; on the left, the ironbound strong-box into which he means to put the hundred and twenty fretzers. There is his arm-chair with its leather pillows; there is his table with the crooked legs, and on it, beside the lamp which is now flickering out, his *materia medica*, open at page 197.

'What's up with me?' he says.

What is up with him? He is alarmed, his pupils dilate. His body seems to be contracting and shrivelling up. A cold sweat bedews his skin, and he feels his hair standing on end.

But he must hurry. Its oil failing, the lamp is on the point of going out—and so is the dying man! *Expire!*
Yes, the bed is there—his bed, with its bed-posts and canopy, as broad as it is long, closed by curtains decorated with large flowers. Can this possibly be the bed of a good-for-nothing?

With a trembling hand the doctor grasps the curtains. He opens them and looks in.

The dying man, his head protruding from the bed-clothes,

lies motionless, as though about to draw his last breath.

The doctor bends over him.

And what a cry, to which responds, from outside, the sinister barking of a dog.

The dying man—this is not the good-for-nothing Vort Kartif! This is Doctor Trifulgas! It is he who has suffered the stroke—he himself! Cerebral apoplexy, with a sudden accumulation of fluid in the cavities of the skull, with paralysis on the opposite side of the body.

Yes! It is he himself for whom he has been sent, for whom the hundred and twenty fretzers have been paid! It is he who, because of the hardness of his heart, has refused to come and tend the good-for-nothing. And it is he who is at the point of death!

Doctor Trifulgas is like a madman. He feels he is lost. His symptoms are increasing from moment to moment. Not only does he feel his powers failing—the throbbing of his heart and his breathing seem about to cease—yet he has not completely forgotten who he is.

What can he do? Reduce the blood-pressure by judicious bleeding? Any hesitation, and Doctor Trifulgas will be lost.

At that time bleeding was still in use, and, then as now, the doctors cured of apoplexy those who were not to die of it.

Doctor Trifulgas grasps his instrument case, takes out a lancet, and makes an incision into a vein in the arm of his counterpart; but the blood no longer flows in his own arm. He vigorously rubs the chest of his counterpart; but the movements of his own chest are ceasing. He applies warmth to the feet of his counterpart; but his own are freezing.

Then his counterpart raises himself, struggles, emits a frightful death-rattle.

And the Doctor Trifulgas, in spite of all that his science could teach him, *dies under his own hands.*

Frritt! Flacc!

VII

NEXT MORNING in Six-Four House they found only one corpse—that of Doctor Trifulgas. He was placed on the bier

and escorted with great pomp to Luktrop Cemetery, to which he has sent so many others—in accordance with the book of rules.

As for the dog Hurzof, people say that he may be seen, with his lantern once more alight, roaming the countryside and howling like a lost soul.

I cannot say whether this is true, but there are so many strange things that happen in the land of Volsine, and especially in the neighbourhood of Luktrop.

But once more I repeat that you must not look for this town on the map. The best geographers have not yet reached agreement about its latitude—or even about its longitude.

GIL BRALTAR

Like 'Frritt-Flacc,' this trifle was originally published at the end of another Verne story on a totally unrelated theme, 'Le Chemin de France' (1887). The translation, after appearing in 'Fantasy and Science-Fiction,' was also included in an American anthology: 'The Best from Fantasy and Science-Fiction,' edited by Anthony Boucher, Eighth Series.

Much as he found to admire in the British character, Verne seems to have developed a great dislike of what is now called the country's 'establishment', and to have regarded British imperialism with a very unfavourable eye—the inclusion in the Empire of Gibraltar seems to have especially jarred upon him.

THERE WERE seven or eight hundred of them at least. Of medium height, but strong, agile supple, framed to make prodigious bounds, they gamboled in the last rays of the sun, now setting over the mountains which formed serried ridges westward of the roadstead. Its reddish disc would soon disappear, and darkness was already falling in the midst of that basin surrounded by the distant sierras of Sanorre and Ronda and by the desolate country of Cuervo.

Suddenly all the band became motionless. The leader had just appeared on the crest resembling the back of a skinny mule which forms the top of the mountain. From the military post perched on the distant summit of the Great Rock nothing could be seen of what was taking place under the trees.

'*Sriss . . . Sriss*'—they heard their leader, whose lips, thrust forward like a hen's beak, gave that whistle an extraordinary intensity.

'*Sriss . . . Sriss*'—the strange army repeated the call in perfect unison.

A remarkable being that leader: tall in height, clad in a monkey's skin with the fur outwards, his head shaggy with unkempt hair, his face bristling with a short beard, his feet bare, their soles as hard as a horse's hoof.

He lifted his hand and extended it towards the lower crest of the mountain. All simultaneously repeated that gesture with a military—or rather with a mechanical—precision, as though they were marionettes moved by the same spring. He lowered his arm. They lowered their arms. He bent towards the ground. They bent down in the same attitude. He picked up a stick and waved it about. They waved their sticks in windmill fashion like his.

Then the leader turned: gliding into the bushes, he crawled between the trees. The troop crawled after him.

In less than ten minutes they were descending the rain-worn mountain paths, but not even the movement of a

pebble had disclosed the presence of that army on the march.

A quarter of an hour later the leader halted: they halted as though frozen to the ground.

Two hundred yards below them appeared the town, stretched along the length of the roadstead, with numerous lights revealing the confused mass of piers, houses, villas, barracks. Beyond, the riding-lights of the warships, merchant-vessels, pontoons, anchored out at sea, were reflected from the surface of the still water. Farther beyond, at the end of Europa Point, the lighthouse projected its beams.

At that moment there sounded a cannon, the 'first gun-fire,' discharged from one of the concealed batteries. Then could also be heard the rolling of the drums and the shrill sound of the fifes.

This was the hour of Retreat, the hour to go indoors: no stranger had the right thereafter to move about the town without being escorted by an officer of the Garrison. It was the hour for the crews to go aboard their ships. Every quarter of an hour the patrols took to the guardroom the stragglers and the drunks. Then all was silent.

General MacKackmale could sleep with both eyes shut.

It seemed that England had nothing to fear, that night, for the Rock of Gibraltar.

II

EVERYBODY KNOWS that formidable Rock. It somewhat resembles an enormous crouching lion, its head towards Spain, its tail dipping into the sea. Its face discloses teeth—seven hundred cannon pointing from the casemates—the old woman's teeth,' as they are called, but those of an old woman who can bite if she is attacked.

Thus England is firmly placed here, as she is at Aden, Malta, and Hong Kong, on cliffs which, aided by the progress of mechanization, she will someday convert into revolving fortresses.

Meanwhile Gibraltar assures to the United Kingdom the incontestable domination of the fifteen miles of that Strait which the club of Hercules struck open in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea between Abyla and Calpe.

Have the Spanish given up the idea of regaining their Peninsula? Unquestionably, for it seems to be impregnable by land and by sea.

But there was someone who cherished the idea of reconquering this defensive and offensive Peninsula. It was the leader of the band, a strange being—or perhaps rather a madman. This hidalgo bore the name of Gil Braltar, a name which, to his mind at least, had predestined him to that patriotic conquest. His reason had not been able to resist it, and his place should have been in a mental home. He was well known, but for ten years nobody knew what had become of him. Had he wandered off into the outer world? In fact, he had not left his ancestral home: he lived there like a troglodyte in the woods, in the caverns, and especially in the unexplored depths of the Cave of San Miguel which, it was reputed, led right down to the sea. He was thought to be dead. He was still alive, none the less, after the style of a savage, bereft of human reason, and obeying only his animal instincts.

III

HE SLEPT well, did General MacKackmale, with both eyes shut, though longer than was permitted by regulations. With his long arms, his round eyes deeply set under their beetling brows, his face embellished with a stubbly beard, his grimaces, his anthropithecoid gestures, the extraordinary prognathism of his jaw, he was remarkably ugly—even for an English general. Something of a monkey but an excellent soldier nevertheless, in spite of his apelike appearance.

Yes, he slept in his comfortable apartments on Waterport Street, that winding road which traverses the town from the Waterport Gate to the Alameda Gate. Was he perhaps dreaming that England would seize Egypt, Turkey, Holland, Afghanistan, the Sudan, the Boer Republics—in short, every part of the globe at her convenience? And this at the very moment when she was in danger of losing Gibraltar!

The door of his bedroom opened with a crash.

‘What’s up?’ shouted the General, sitting erect with a bound.

'Sir,' replied the aide-de-camp who had just burst in like a bombshell, 'the town has been invaded!'

'The Spanish?'

'Presumably, sir.'

'They have dared—'

The General did not complete his sentence. He got up, wrenched off the nightcap which adorned his head, jumped into his trousers, pulled on his cloak, slid down into his boots, clapped on his helmet and buckled on his sword even while saying: 'What's that racket I can hear?'

'It's the clatter of lumps of rock falling like an avalanche on the town.'

'Then there's a lot of them?'

'Yes, sir, there must be.'

'Then all the bandits of the coast must have joined forces to take us by surprise—the smugglers of Ronda, the fishermen of San Roque, the refugees who are swarming in the villages?'

'Yes, sir, I'm afraid so.'

'Well, has the Governor been warned?'

'No, sir; we can't possibly get through to his residence on Europa Point. The gates have been seized, and the streets are full of the enemy.'

'What about the barracks at the Waterport Gate?'

'We can't get there either. The gunners must have been locked up in their barracks.'

'How many men have you got with you?'

'About twenty, sir—men of the Third Regiment who have been able to get away.'

'By Saint Dunstan!' shouted General MacKackmale. 'Gibraltar taken from England by those—those—orange-vendors! It's not going to happen! No! It shan't!'

At that very instant the bedroom door opened, to admit a strange being who jumped on to the General's shoulders.

"
'SURRENDER!' HE howled in raucous tones which sounded more like the roar of a beast than like a human voice.

Several men, who had entered with the aide-de-camp, were about to throw themselves on that being when, seeing him by the light of the room, they recoiled.

'Gil Braltar!' they cried.

It was indeed that hidalgo whom nobody had seen for a long time—that savage from the caves of San Miguel.

'Will you surrender?' he howled.

'Never!' replied General MacKackmale.

Suddenly, just as the soldiers were surrounding him, Gil Braltar emitted a prolonged and shrill '*Griss*.' At once the courtyard of the house itself, were filled with an invading army.

Could it be credible! They were monkeys, they were apes—hundreds of them! Had they come to seize from the English that Rock of which they themselves are the true owners, that hill on which they had dwelt even before the Spanish, and certainly long before Cromwell had dreamed of conquering it for Britain?

Yes, they certainly had! And their numbers made them formidable, these tailless apes with whom one could live on good terms only by tolerating their thieving; those cunning and audacious beasts whom one took care not to molest because they revenged themselves—as had sometimes happened—by rolling enormous rocks on the town.

And now these apes had become an army led by a madman as fierce as themselves—by this Gil Braltar whom they knew, who shared their independent life, by this four-legged William Tell whose whole existence was devoted to the one idea—to drive the foreigners from Spanish soil!

What a disgrace for the United Kingdom if the attempt succeeded! The English, conquerors of the Hindoos, of the Abyssinians, of the Tasmanians, of the Australian Black-fellows, of the Hottentots, and of so many others, to be overcome by mere apes!

If such a catastrophe took place, all that General MacKackmale could do would be to blow out his brains! He could never survive such a dishonour.

However, before the apes whom their leader's whistle had summoned had entered the room, a few of the soldiers had been able to throw themselves upon Gil Braltar. The madman, endowed with superhuman strength, struggled, and only after great difficulty was he overcome. The monkey-skin which he had borrowed having been torn from him,

he was thrust into a corner almost naked, gagged, bound, unable to move or to utter a cry. A little later General MacKackmale rushed from the house resolved, in the best military tradition, to conquer or die.

The danger was no less outside. A few of the soldiers had been able to rally, probably at the Waterport Gate, and were advancing towards the General's house, and a few shots could be heard in Waterport Street and the market-place. Nonetheless, so great was the number of apes that the garrison of Gibraltar was in danger of being forced to give up the position. And then, if the Spaniards made common cause with the monkeys, the forts would be abandoned, the batteries deserted, and the fortifications would not have even one defender.

Suddenly the situation was completely changed.

Indeed in the torchlight the apes could be seen beating a retreat. At their head marched their leader, brandishing his stick. And all, copying the movements of his arms and legs, were following him at the same speed.

Then had Gil Braltar been able to free himself from his bonds, to escape from that room where he had been imprisoned? It could not be doubted. But where was he going now? Was he going towards Europa Point, to the Residence of the Governor, to attack him and call on him to surrender?

No! The madman and his army descended Waterport Street. Then, having passed the Alameda Gate, they set off obliquely across the Park and up the slopes.

An hour later, not one of the invaders of Gibraltar remained.

Then what had happened?

This was disclosed later, when General MacKackmale appeared on the edge of the Park.

It was he who, taking the madman's place, had directed the retreat of that army after having wrapped himself up in the monkey skin. So much did he resemble an ape, that gallant warrior, that he had deceived the monkeys themselves. So he had only to appear for them to follow him . . .

It was indeed the idea of a genius, and it well merited the award to him of the Cross of the Order of St. George.

As for Gil Braltar, the United Kingdom gave him, for cash down, to a Barnum, who soon made his fortune exhibiting him in the towns of the Old and the New World. He even let it be supposed, that Barnum, that it was not the

Wild 'Man of San Miguel whom he was exhibiting, but General MacKackmale himself.

The episode had certainly been a lesson for the government of Her Gracious Majesty. They realized that if Gibraltar could not be taken by man it was at the mercy of the apes. And that is why England, always practical, decided that in future it would send to the Rock only the ugliest of its generals, so that the monkeys could be deceived once more.

This simple precaution will secure it for ever the ownership of Gibraltar.

IN THE TWENTYNINTH CENTURY:
THE DAY OF AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST IN

2889

AU XXIXME SIÈCLE
LA JOURNÉE D'UN JOURNALISTE
AMÉRICAIN EN 2889

This 'fantasy', as its original Editor called it, has had an unusual history—for some reason it was first published in English! It originally appeared in an American magazine, 'The Forum', in February, 1889. Later it was published, though with several alterations, in French. Its Editor, however, says that in preparing it for re-publication he sometimes had to refer to what he calls the 'primitive English text.'

'Fantasy' though it may be, it has more serious aspects; it is obviously a satire on certain tendencies which Verne observed in contemporary life. The future inventions he describes may be left to speak for themselves: he had boundless faith in the potentialities of electricity, and a reference in another of his books, 'Carpathian Castle' show that he regarded what he called the 'telephote'—a method of transmitting visual images by wire—as the obvious adjunct to the telephone.*

According to the French critic Étienne Gluzel, a number of these inventions were derived by Verne from another 'forecast' 'Le Vingtième Siècle' by Albert Robida. As the latter's ideas of the submarine of the future were obviously based on Verne's 'Nautilus' in '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea', the two authors may possibly have had an amicable agreement to exchange ideas.*

The somewhat dramatic incident related on page 124 was omitted in the original English version, possibly because Verne feared that in contemporary Transatlantic eyes it might be considered 'shocking'!

*Included in the Fitzroy Edition of Jules Verne.

I

THE MEN of the twentieth century live in a perpetual fairyland, though they do not seem to realise it. Bored with wonders, they are cold towards everything that progress brings them every day. It all seems only natural.

If they compared it with the past, they would better appreciate what our civilisation is, and realise what a road it has traversed. What would then seem finer than our modern cities, with streets a hundred yards wide, with buildings a thousand feet high, always at an equable temperature, and the sky furrowed by thousands of aero-cars and aero-'buses! Compared with these towns, whose population may include up to ten million inhabitants, what were those villages, those hamlets of a thousand years ago, that Paris, that London, that New York,—muddy and badly ventilated townships, traversed by jolting contraptions, hauled along by horses—yes! by horses! it's unbelievable!

If they recalled the erratic working of the steamers and the railways, their many collisions, and their slowness, how greatly would travellers value the aero-trains, and especially these pneumatic tubes laid beneath the oceans, which convey them with a speed of a thousand miles an hour? And would they not enjoy the telephone and the telephot? even better if they recollected that our fathers were reduced to that antediluvial apparatus which they called the 'telegraph?'

It's very strange. These surprising transformations are based on principles which were quite well known to our ancestors, although these, so to speak, made no use of them. Heat, steam, electricity, are as old as mankind. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, did not the savants declare that the only difference between the physical and chemical forces consists of the special rates of vibration of the etheric particles?

As so enormous a stride had been made, that of recognising the mutual relationship of all these forces, it is incredible that it took so long to work out the rates of vibration

that differentiate between them. It is especially surprising that the method of passing directly from one to another, and of producing one without the other, has only been discovered so recently.

So it was however, that things happened, and it was only in 1790, about a hundred years ago, that the famous Oswald Nyer succeeded in doing so.

A real benefactor of humanity, that great man! His achievement, a work of genius, was the parent of all the others! A constellation of inventors was born out of it, culminating in our extraordinary James Jackson. It is to him that we owe the new accumulators, some of which condense the force of the solar rays, others the electricity stored in the heart of our globe, and yet again others, energy coming from any source whatever, whether it be the waterfalls, winds, or rivers. It is to him that we owe no less the transformer which, at a touch on a simple switch, draws on the force that lives in the accumulators and releases it as heat, light, electricity, or mechanical power after it has performed any task we need.

Yes, it was from the day on which these two appliances were thought out that progress really dates. They have given mankind almost an infinite power. Through mitigating the bleakness of winter by restoring to it the excessive heat of the summer, they have revolutionised agriculture. By providing motive power for the appliances used in aerial navigation, they have enabled commerce to make a splendid leap forward. It is to them that we owe the unceasing production of electricity without either batteries or machines, light without combustion or incandescence, and finally that inexhaustible source of energy which has increased industrial production a hundred-fold.

Very well then! The whole of these wonders, we shall meet them in an incomparable office-block—the office of the *Earth Herald*, recently inaugurated in the 16823rd Avenue.

If the founder of the *New York Herald*, Gordon Bennett, were to be born a second time today, what would he say when he saw this palace of marble and gold that belongs to his illustrious descendant, Francis Bennett? Thirty generations had followed one another, and the *New York Herald* had always stayed in that same Bennett family. Two hundred years before, when the government of the Union had been transferred from Washington to Centropolis, the news-

paper had followed the government—if it were not that the government had followed the newspaper—and it had taken its new title, the *Earth Herald*.

And let nobody imagine that it had declined under the administration of Francis Bennett. No! On the contrary, its new director had given it an equalled vitality and driving-power by the inauguration of telephonic journalism.

Everybody knows that system, made possible by the incredible diffusion of the telephone. Every morning, instead of being printed as in antiquity, the *Earth Herald* is 'spoken.' It is by means of a brisk conversation with a reporter, a political figure, or a scientist, that the subscribers can learn whatever happens to interest them. As for those who buy an odd number for a few cents, they know that they can get acquainted with the day's issue through the countless phonographic cabinets.

This innovation of Francis Bennett restored new life to the old journal. In a few months its clientèle numbered eightyfive million subscribers, and the director's fortune rose to three hundred million dollars, and has since gone far beyond that. Thanks to this fortune, he was able to build his new office—a colossal edifice with four façades each two miles long, whose roof is sheltered beneath the glorious flag, with its seventyfive stars, of the Confederation.

Francis Bennett, king of journalists, would then have been king of the two Americas, if the Americans would ever accept any monarch whatever. Do you doubt this? But the plenipotentiaries of every nation and our very ministers, throng around his door, peddling their advice, seeking his approval, imploring the support of his all-powerful organ. Count up the scientists whom he has encouraged, the artists whom he employs, the inventors whom he subsidises! A wearisome monarchy was his, work without respite, and certainly nobody of earlier times would ever have been able to carry out so unremitting a daily grind. Fortunately however, the men of today have a more robust constitution, thanks to the progress of hygiene and of gymnastics, which from thirty-seven years has now increased to sixty-eight the average length of human life—thanks too to the aseptic foods, while we wait for the next discovery: that of nutritious air which will enable us to take nourishment . . . only by breathing.

And now, if you would like to know everything that con-

stitutes the day of a director of the *Earth Herald*, take the trouble to follow him in his multifarious operations—this very day, this July 25th of the present year, 2889.

That morning Francis Bennett awoke in rather a bad temper. This was eight days since his wife had been in France and he was feeling a little lonely. Can it be credited? They had been married ten years, and this was the first time that Mrs. Edith Bennett, that *professional beauty*, had been so long away. Two or three days usually sufficed for her frequent journeys to Europe and especially to Paris, where she went to buy her hats.

As soon as he awoke, Francis Bennett switched on his phonotelephone, whose wires led to the house he owned in the Champs-Élysées.

The telephone, completed by the telephote, is another of our time's conquests! Though the transmission of speech by the electric current was already very old, it was only since yesterday that vision could also be transmitted. A valuable discovery, and Francis Bennett was by no means the only one to bless its inventor when, in spite of the enormous distance between them, he saw his wife appear in the telephotic mirror.

A lovely vision! A little tired by last night's theatre or dance, Mrs. Bennett was still in bed. Although where she was it was nearly noon, her charming head was buried in the lace of the pillow. But there she was stirring . . . her lips were moving . . . No doubt she was dreaming? . . . Yes! She was dreaming . . . A name slipped from her mouth. 'Francis . . . dear Francis! . . .'

His name, spoken by that sweet voice, gave a happier turn to Francis Bennett's mood. Not wanting to wake the pretty sleeper, he quickly jumped out of bed, and went into his mechanised dressing-room.

Two minutes later, without needing the help of a valet, the machine deposited him, washed, shaved, shod, dressed and buttoned from top to toe, on the threshold of his office. The day's work was going to begin.

It was into the room of the serialised novelists that Francis first entered.

Very big that room, surmounted by a large translucent dome. In a corner, several telephonic instruments by which the hundred authors of the *Earth Herald* related a hundred chapters of a hundred romances to the enfevered public.

Catching sight of one of these serialists who was snatching five minutes' rest, Francis Bennett said:

'Very fine, my dear fellow, very fine, that last chapter of yours! That scene where the young village girl is discussing with her admirer some of the problems of transcendental philosophy shows very keen powers of observation! These country manners have never been more clearly depicted! Go on that way, my dear Archibald, and good luck to you. Ten thousand new subscribers since yesterday, thanks to you!'

'Mr. John Last' he continued, turning towards another of his collaborators, 'I'm not so satisfied with you! It hasn't any life, your story! You're in too much of a hurry to get to the end! Well! and what about all that documentation? You've got to dissect, John Last, you've got to dissect! It isn't with a pen one writes nowadays, it's with a scalpel! Every action in real life is the resultant of a succession of fleeting thoughts, and they've got to be carefully set out to create a living being! And what's easier than to use electrical hypnosis, which redoubles its subject and separates his two-fold personality! Watch yourself living, John Last, my dear fellow! Imitate your colleague whom I've just been congratulating! Get yourself hypnotised . . . What? . . . You're having it done, you say? . . . Not good enough yet, not good enough!'

Having given this little lesson, Francis Bennett continued his inspection and went on into the reporters' room. His fifteen hundred reporters, placed before an equal number of telephones, were passing on to subscribers the news which had come in during the night from the four quarters of the earth.

The organisation of this incomparable service has often been described. In addition to his telephone, each reporter has in front of him a series of commutators, which allow him to get into communication with this or that telephotic line. Thus the subscribers have not only the story but the sight of these events. When it is a question of 'miscellaneous facts', which are things of the past by the time they are described, their principal phases alone are transmitted; these are obtained by intensive photography.

Francis Bennett questioned one of the ten astronomical reporters—a service which was growing because of the recent discoveries in the stellar world.

'Well, Cash, what have you got?'

'Phototelegrams from Mercury, Venus and Mars, sir.'

'Interesting, that last one?'

'Yes! a revolution in the Central Empire, in support of the reactionary liberals against the republican conservatives.'

'Just like us, then!—And Jupiter?'

'Nothing so far! We haven't been able to understand the signals the Jovians make. Perhaps ours haven't reached them? ...'

'That's your job, and I hold you responsible, Mr. Cash!' Francis Bennett replied; extremely dissatisfied, he went on to the scientific editorial room.

Bent over their computers, thirty savants were absorbed in equations of the ninetyfifth degree. Some indeed were revelling in the formulae of algebraical infinity and of twentyfour dimensional space, like a child in the elementary class dealing with the four rules of arithmetic.

Francis Bennett fell among them rather like a bombshell.

'Well, gentlemen, what's this they tell me? No reply from Jupiter? ... It's always the same! Look here, Corley, it seems to me it's been twenty years that you've been pegging away at that planet ...'

'What do you expect, sir?' the savant replied. 'Our optical science still leaves something to be desired, and even with our telescopes two miles long ...'

'You hear that, Peer?' broke in Francis Bennett, addressing himself to Corley's neighbour. 'Optical science leaves something to be desired! ... That's your speciality, that is, my dear fellow! Put on your glasses, devil take it! put on your glasses!'

Then, turning back to Corley:

'But, failing Jupiter, aren't you getting some result from the moon, at any rate?'

'Not yet, Mr. Bennett.'

'Well, this time, you can't blame optical science! The moon is six hundred times nearer than Mars, and yet our correspondence service is in regular operation with Mars. It can't be telescopes we're needing ...'

'No, it's the inhabitants' Corley replied with the thin smile of a savant stuffed with X.

'You dare tell me that the moon is uninhabited?'

'On the face it turns towards us, at any rate, Mr. Bennett. Who knows whether on the other side?' . . .

'Well, there's a very simple method of finding out . . .'

'And that is? . . .'

'To turn the moon round!'

And that very day, the scientists of the Bennett factory started working out some mechanical means of turning our satellite right round.

On the whole Francis Bennett had reason to be satisfied. One of the *Earth Herald's* astronomers had just determined the elements of the new planet Gandini. It is at a distance of 12,841,348,284,623 meters and 7 decimeters that this planet describes its orbit round the sun in 572 years, 194 days, 12 hours, 43 minutes, 9.8 seconds.

Francis Bennett was delighted with such precision.

'Good!' he exclaimed 'hurry up and tell the reportage service about it. You know what a passion the public has for these astronomical questions. I'm anxious for the news to appear in today's issue!'

Before leaving the reporters' room he took up another matter with a special group of interviewers, addressing the one who dealt with celebrities: 'You've interviewed President Wilcox?' he asked.

'Yes, Mr. Bennett, and I'm publishing the information that he's certainly suffering from a dilatation of the stomach, and that he's most conscientiously undergoing a course of tubular irrigations.'

'Splendid. And that business of Chapmann the assassin? . . . Have you interviewed the jurymen who are to sit at the Assizes?'

'Yes, and they all agree that he's guilty, so that the case won't even have to be submitted to them. The accused will be executed before he's sentenced.'

'Splendid! Splendid!'

The next room, a broad gallery about a quarter of a mile long, was devoted to publicity, and it well may be imagined what the publicity for such a journal as the *Earth Herald* had to be. It brought in a daily average of three million dollars. Very ingeniously, indeed, some of the publicity obtained took an absolutely novel form, the result of a patent bought at an outlay of three dollars from a poor devil who had since died of hunger. They are gigantic signs reflected on the clouds, so large that they can be seen all over a whole

country. From that gallery a thousand projectors were unceasingly employed in sending to the clouds, on which they were reproduced in colour, these inordinate advertisements.

But that day when Francis Bennett entered the publicity room he found the technicians with their arms folded beside their idle projectors. He asked them about it . . . The only reply he got was that somebody pointed to the blue sky.

'Yes! . . . A fine day' he muttered, 'so we can't get any aerial publicity! What's to be done about that? If there isn't any rain, we can produce it! But it isn't rain, it's clouds that we need!'

'Yes, some fine snow-white clouds!' replied the chief technician.

'Well, Mr. Simon Mark, you'd better get in touch with the scientific editors, meteorological service. You can tell them from me that they can get busy on the problem of artificial clouds. We really can't be at the mercy of the fine weather.'

After finishing his inspection of the different sections of the paper, Francis Bennett went to his reception hall, where he found awaiting him the ambassadors and plenipotentiary ministers accredited to the American government: these gentlemen had come to ask advice from the all-powerful director. As he entered the room they were carrying on rather a lively discussion.

'Pardon me, your Excellency' the French Ambassador addressed the Ambassador from Russia. 'But I can't see anything that needs changing in the map of Europe. The north to the Slavs, agreed! But the south to the Latins! Our common frontier along the Rhine seems quite satisfactory. Understand me clearly, that our government will certainly resist any attempt which may be made against our Prefectures of Rome, Madrid, and Vienna!'

'Well said!' Francis Bennett intervened in the discussion. 'What, Mr. Russian Ambassador, you're not satisfied with your great empire, which extends from the banks of the Rhine as far as the frontiers of China? An empire whose immense coast is bathed by the Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic, the Black Sea, the Bosphorus, and the Indian Ocean?'

'And besides, what's the use of threats? Is war with our modern weapons possible? These asphyxiating shells which can be sent a distance of a hundred miles, these electric

flashes, sixty miles long, which can annihilate a whole army corps at a single blow, these projectiles loaded with the microbes of plague, cholera, and yellow fever, and which can destroy a whole nation in a few hours?'

'We realise that, Mr. Bennett' the Russian Ambassador replied. 'But are we free to do what we like? . . . Thrust back ourselves by the Chinese on our Eastern frontier, we must, at all costs, attempt something towards the west . . .'

'Is that all it is, sir?' Francis Bennett replied in reassuring tones—'Well! as the proliferation of the Chinese is getting to be a danger to the world, we'll bring pressure to bear on the Son of Heaven. He'll simply have to impose a maximum birth-rate on his subjects, not to be exceeded on pain of death! A child too many? . . . A father less! That will keep things balanced.'

'And you, Sir' the director of the *Earth Herald* continued, addressing the English consul, 'what can I do to be of service to you?'

'A great deal, Mr. Bennett' that personage replied. 'It would be enough for your journal to open a campaign on our behalf . . .'

'And with what purpose?'

'Merely to protest against the annexation of Great Britain by the United States . . .'

'Merely that!' Francis Bennett exclaimed. He shrugged his shoulders. 'An annexation that's a hundred and fifty years old already! But won't you English gentry ever resign yourselves to the fact that by a just compensation of events here below, their country has become an American colony? That's pure madness! How could your government ever have believed that I should ever open so antipatriotic a campaign . . .'

'Mr. Bennett, you know that the Monroe doctrine is all America for the Americans, and nothing more than America, and not . . .'

'But England is only one of our colonies, one of the finest. Don't count upon our ever consenting to give her up!'

'You refuse?'

'I refuse, and if you insist, we shall make it a *casus belli*, based on nothing more than an interview with one of our reporters.'

'So that's the end' the consul was overwhelmed. 'The

United Kingdom, Canada, and New Britain belong to the Americans, India to the Russians, and Australia and New Zealand to themselves! Of all that once was England, what's left? . . . Nothing!'

'Nothing, Sir?' retorted Francis Bennett. 'Well, what about Gibraltar?'

At that moment the clock struck twelve. The director of the *Earth Herald*, ending the audience with a gesture, left the hall, and sat down in a rolling armchair. In a few minutes he had reached his dining room, half a mile away, at the far end of the office.

The table was laid, and he took his place at it. Within reach of his hand was placed a series of taps, and before him was the curved surface of a phonotelephote, on which appeared the dining-room of his home in Paris. Mr. and Mrs. Bennett had arranged to have lunch at the same time—nothing could be more pleasant than to be face to face in spite of the distance, to see one another and talk by means of the phonotelephotic apparatus.

But the room in Paris was still empty.

'Edith is late' Francis Bennett said to himself. 'Oh, women's punctuality! Everything makes progress, except that.'

And after this too just reflection, he turned on one of the taps.

Like everybody else in easy circumstances nowadays, Francis Bennett, having abandoned domestic cooking, is one of the subscribers to the *Society for Supplying Food to the Home*, which distributes dishes of a thousand types through a network of pneumatic tubes. This system is expensive, no doubt, but the cooking is better, and it has the advantage that it has suppressed that hair-raising race, the cooks of both sexes.

So, not without some regret, Francis Bennett was lunching in solitude. He was finishing his coffee when Mrs. Bennett, having got back home, appeared in the telephoto screen.

'Where have you been, Edith dear?' Francis Bennett enquired.

'What?' Mr. Bennett replied. 'You've finished? . . . I must be late, then? . . . Where have I been? Of course, I've been with my *modiste* . . . This year's hats are so bewitching!

'They're not hats at all . . . they're domes, they're cupolas! I rather lost count of time!'

'Rather, my dear? You lost it so much that here's my lunch finished.'

'Well, run along then, my dear . . . run along to your work' Mrs. Bennett replied. 'I've still got a visit to make, to my *modeleur-couturier*.'

And this *couturier* was no other than the famous Worm-spire, the very man who so judiciously remarked 'Woman is only a question of shape!'

Francis Bennett kissed Mrs. Bennett's cheek on the telephone screen and went across to the window, where his aero-car was waiting.

'Where are we going, Sir?' asked the aero-coachman.

'Let's see. I've got time . . .' Francis Bennett replied. 'Take me to my accumulator works at Niagara.'

The *aéro-car*, an apparatus splendidly based on the principle of 'heavier than air', shot across space at a speed of about four hundred miles an hour. Below him were spread out the towns with their moving pavements which carry the wayfarers along the streets, and the countryside, covered, as though by an immense spider's web, by the network of electric wires.

Within half-an-hour, Francis Bennett had reached his works at Niagara, where, after using the force of the cataracts to produce energy, he sold or hired it out to the consumers. Then, his visit over, he returned, by way of Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, to Centropolis, where his aero-car put him down about five o'clock.

The waiting room of the *Earth Herald* was crowded. A careful lookout was being kept for Francis Bennett to return for the daily audience he gave to his petitioners. They included the capital's acquisitive inventors, company promoters with enterprises to suggest—all splendid, to listen to them. Among these different proposals he had to make a choice, reject the bad ones, look into the doubtful ones, give a welcome to the good ones.

He soon got rid of those who had only got useless or impracticable schemes. One of them—didn't he claim to revive painting, an art which had fallen into such desuetude that Millet's *Angelus* had just been sold for fifteen francs—thanks to the progress of colour photography invented at the end of the twentieth century by the Japanese, whose

name was on everybody's lips—Aruziswa-Riochi-Nichome-Sanjukamboz-Kio-Baski-Kû? Another, hadn't he discovered the biogene bacillus which, after being introduced into the human organism, would make man immortal? This one, a chemist, hadn't he discovered a new substance. *Nihilium*, of which a gram would cost only three million dollars? That one, a most daring physician, wasn't he claiming that he'd found a remedy for a cold in the head?

All these dreamers were at once shown out.

A few of the others received a better welcome, and foremost among them was a young man whose broad brow indicated a high degree of intelligence.

'Sir' he began, 'though the number of elements used to be estimated at seventy-five, it has now been reduced to three, as no doubt you are aware?'

'Perfectly' Francis Bennett replied.

'Well, sir, I'm on the point of reducing the three to one. If I don't run out of money I'll have succeeded in three weeks.'

'And then?'

'Then, sir, I shall really have discovered the absolute.'

'And the results of that discovery?'

'It will be to make the creation of all forms of matter easy—stone, wood, metal, fibrin . . .'

'Are you saying you're going to be able to construct a human being?'

'Completely . . . The only thing missing will be the soul!'

'Only that!' was the ironical reply of Francis Bennett, who however assigned the young fellow to the scientific editorial department of his journal.

A second inventor, using as a basis some old experiments that dated from the nineteenth century and had often been repeated since, had the idea of moving a whole city in a single block. He suggested, as a demonstration, the town of Saaf, situated fifteen miles from the sea; after conveying it on rails down to the shore, he would transform it into a seaside resort. That would add an enormous value to the ground already built on and to be built over.

Francis Bennett, attracted by this project, agreed to take a half share in it.

'You know, sir' said a third applicant 'that, thanks to our solar and terrestrial accumulators and transformers, we've been able to equalise the seasons. I suggest doing even

better. By converting into heat part of the energy we have at our disposal and transmitting the heat to the polar regions we can melt the ice . . .'

'Leave your plans with me' Francis Bennett replied 'and come back in a week.'

Finally, a fourth savant brought the news that one of the questions which had excited the whole world was about to be solved that very evening.

As is well known, a century ago a daring experiment made by Dr. Nathaniel Faithburn had attracted public attention. A convinced supporter of the idea of human hibernation—the possibility of arresting the vital functions and then re-awakening them after a certain time—he had decided to test the value of the method on himself. After, by a holograph will, describing the operations necessary to restore him to life a hundred years later to the day, he had exposed himself to a cold of 172° centigrade (278° fahrenheit) below zero; thus reduced to a mummified state, he had been shut up in a tomb for the stated period.

Now it was exactly on that very day, July 25th 2889, that the period expired, and Francis Bennett had just received an offer to proceed in one of the rooms of the *Earth Herald* office with the resurrection so impatiently waited for. The public could then be kept in touch with it second by second.

The proposal was accepted, and as the operation was not to take place until ten that evening, Francis Bennett went to stretch himself out in an easy chair in the audition room. Then, pressing a button, he was put into communication with the Central Concert.

After so busy a day, what a charm he found in the works of our greatest masters, based, as everybody knows, on a series of delicious harmonico-algebraic formulae!

The room had been darkened, and, plunged into an ecstatic half-sleep, Francis Bennett could not even see himself. But a door opened suddenly.

'Who's there?' he asked, touching a commutator placed beneath his hand.

At once, by an electric effect produced on the ether, the air became luminous.

'Oh, it's you, doctor?' he asked.

'Myself' replied Dr. Sam, who had come to pay his daily visit (annual subscription). 'How's it going?'

'Fine!'

'All the better . . . Let's see your tongue?'

He looked at it through a microscope.

'Good . . . And your pulse?'

He tested it with a pulsograph, similar to the instruments which record earthquakes.

'Splendid! . . . And your appetite?'

'Ugh!'

'Oh, your stomach! . . . It isn't going too well, your stomach! . . . It's getting old, your stomach is! . . . We'll certainly have to get you a new one!'

'We'll see!' Francis Bennett replied, 'and meantime, doctor, you'll dine with me.'

During the meal, phonotelephotic communication had been set up with Paris. Mrs. Bennett was at her table this time, and the dinner, livened up by Dr. Sam's jokes, was delightful. Hardly was it over than:

'When do you expect to get back to Centropolis, dear Edith?' asked Francis Bennett.

'I'm going to start this moment.'

'By tube or aero-train?'

'By tube.'

'Then you'll be here?'

'At eleven fifty-nine this evening.'

'Paris time?'

'No, no! . . . Centropolis time.'

'Good-bye then, and above all don't miss the tube!'

These submarine tubes, by which one travels from Paris in two hundred and ninety-five minutes, are certainly much preferable to the aero-trains, which only manage six hundred miles an hour.

The doctor had gone, after promising to return to be present at the resurrection of his colleague Nathaniel Faithburn. Wishing to draw up his daily accounts, Francis Bennett went into his private office. An enormous operation, when it concerns an enterprise whose expenditure rises to eight hundred thousand dollars every day! Fortunately, the development of modern mechanisation has greatly facilitated this work. Helped by the piano-electric-computer, Francis Bennett soon completed his task.

It was time. Hardly had he struck the last key of the mechanical totalisator than his presence was asked for in the experimental room. He went off to it at once, and was wel-

comed by a large cortège of scientists, who had been joined by Dr. Sam.

Nathaniel Faithburn's body is there, on the bier, placed on trestles in the centre of the room.

The telephoto is switched on. The whole world will be able to follow the various phases of the operation.

The coffin is opened . . . Nathaniel Faithburn's body is taken out . . . It is still like a mummy, yellow, hard, dry. It sounds like wood . . . It is submitted to heat . . . electricity . . . No result . . . It's hypnotised . . . It's exposed to suggestion . . . Nothing can overcome that ultra-cataleptic state.

'Well, Dr. Sam?' asks Francis Bennett.

The doctor leans over the body; he examines it very carefully . . . He introduces into it, by means of an hypodermic, a few drops of the famous Brown-Séquard elixir, which is once again in fashion . . . The mummy is more mummified than ever

'Oh well' Dr. Sam replies 'I think the hibernation has lasted too long . . .'

'Oh!'

'And Nathaniel Faithburn is dead.'

'Dead?'

'As dead as anybody could be!'

'And how long has he been dead?'

'How long?' . . . Dr. Sam replies. 'But . . . a hundred years—that is to say, since he had the unhappy idea of freezing himself for pure love of science!'

'Then' Francis Bennett comments 'that's a method which still needs to be perfected!'

'Perfected is the word' replies Dr. Sam, while the scientific commission on hibernation carries away its funereal bundle.

Followed by Dr. Sam, Francis Bennett regained his room, and as he seemed very tired after so very full a day, the doctor advised him to take a bath before going to bed.

'You're quite right, doctor . . . That will refresh me . . .'

'It will, Mr. Bennett, and if you like I'll order one on my way out . . .'

'There's no need for that, doctor. There's always a bath all ready in the office, and I needn't even have the trouble

of going out of my room to take it. Look, simply by touching this button, that bath will start moving, and you'll see it come along all by itself with the water at a temperature of sixtyfive degrees! '

Francis Bennett had just touched the button. A rumbling sound began, got louder, increased . . . Then one of the doors opened, and the bath appeared, gliding along on its rails . . .

Heavens! While Dr. Sam veils his face, little screams of frightened modesty arise from the bath . . .

Brought to the office by the transatlantic tube half an hour before, Mrs. Bennett was inside it.

Next day, July 26th 2889, the director of the *Earth Herald* recommenced his tour of twelve miles across his office. That evening, when his totalisator had been brought into action, it was at two hundred and fifty thousand dollars that it calculated the profits of that day—fifty thousand more than the day before.

A fine job, that of a journalist at the end of the twenty-ninth century!

MR. RAY SHARP AND MISS ME FLAT

This story, which one of Verne's French admirers described as 'Hoffmanesque', first appeared in the 'Figaro illustré' for December 1893. Its chief interest lies in its being possibly Verne's only description of childhood, and as when it appeared he was in his sixties it may have been an attempt to recapture some of his own childhood's emotions; when he wrote it, too, he may already have been feeling the onset of the deafness which assailed him in his declining years.

According to his nephew Maurice, music was among one of Jules Verne's three great passions—the others being freedom and the sea.—This story, fantastic as it is, may indeed have been suggested by Verne's interest in the theory of tonality.

I

THERE WERE about thirty of us children in Kalfermatt School, a score of boys between six and twelve years old, and ten girls between four and nine. If you want to know where exactly the village is, it stands according to my Geography (page 47) in one of the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, not far from the Lake of Constance, at the foot of the Appenzell Mountains.

'Here—you down there, Joseph Müller?'

'Mr. Valrügis?' I answered.

'What's that you're writing while I'm teaching history?'

'I'm taking notes, Sir.'

'Good.'

The truth is that I was drawing faces, while our master was relating for the thousandth time the story of William Tell and the ferocious Gessler. Nobody understood it as well as he. There was only one point which remained to be cleared up: what sort of an apple was it that the Swiss hero had placed on his son's head, that apple which had been as much argued about as the one which our mother Eve plucked from the Tree of Good and Evil?

The village of Kalfermatt is pleasantly situated in the depths of one of those depressions called *vans* excavated in the far side of the mountain, the one which the rays even of the summer sun can never reach. The school, sheltered by greenery at the very end of the village, has none of the forbidding look of a factory of elementary education. It has a cheerful appearance and stands in the fresh air; it has a large well-planted yard with a covered playground for rainy days; in the tiny belfry the school-bell sings like a bird in the tree-tops.

It is Mr. Valrügis who keeps school, aided by his sister Lisbeth, an old maid more severe than himself. The two are enough to teach everything: reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history—the history and geography of Switzerland, that goes without saying. We have classes every day,

except Thursdays and Sundays. We arrive at eight with our baskets and our schoolbooks strapped on top. In the baskets there's something to eat at the mid-day break: bread, cold meat, cheese, fruit, and a small bottle of watered wine. In the books there's what we're being taught: dictation, figures, problems. At four we all take home the baskets, emptied to their last crumb.

'... Miss Betty Clère?'

'Mr. Valrügis?' replied the little girl.

'You don't seem to be paying attention to what I'm saying. Where have we got to, please?'

'Just now' the girl babbled 'we've got to where William refuses to bow to Gessler's cap.'

'You're wrong! ... We're not at the cap now, we're trying to make out what sort of apple it is!'

Thus put to confusion, Miss Betty Clère lowered her eyes, after giving me one of those glances which I liked so much.

'No doubt' Mr. Valrügis went on sarcastically 'if this story were sung instead of being recited, you'd have liked it better, you with your taste for singing! But no musician will ever dare to put such a subject into music!'

Perhaps our schoolmaster is right? What composer would claim to touch such strings as these? ... And yet who knows? ... Perhaps in the future?

But Mr. Valrügis goes on with his dictation. Large and small alike, we are all ears. We can hear William Tell's arrow whistling across the class-room ... for the hundredth time since the last holidays.

II

MR. VALRÜGIS certainly assigns to the art of music only a very inferior rank. Is he right? We were then too young to have any opinion. Just imagine, I was one of the biggest, and yet I had not so far reached my tenth year. Not quite a dozen of us loved the songs of our fatherland, the old folk-tunes sung during the evenings, as well as the hymns of the great festivals, and the chanted anthems accompanied by the

organ of Kalfermatt Church. Then the stained glass windows trembled, the children of the choir raised their falsetto voices, the censers swung, and the versicles, the motets, the responses, seemed to be ascending on high in the midst of the aromatic smoke . . .

I don't want to boast, because that's an unworthy thing to do, although I was one of the foremost in the class, and so it isn't for me to say. But if you want to know why it is that I, Joseph Müller, son of William Müller and Marguerite Has, and now, after my father, postmaster at Kalfermatt, should be called *Ray Sharp*, and why Betty Clère, daughter of Jean Clère and Jenny Rose, innkeepers in the same place, should bear the surname of *Me Flat*, my answer is 'Patience, you'll soon be told.' Don't go on any faster than you have to, children. One thing is certain, that our two voices blended together splendidly, while we waited until we could get married. And I'm quite old, children, now that I'm writing this story, and I know things that I didn't know then—even about music.

Yes! Mr. Ray Sharp has married Miss Me Flat, and we're very happy, and with work and good behaviour we've made splendid progress . . . If the postmaster doesn't know how to behave himself, who does?

So, forty years ago, we were singing in church, for I must tell you that the little girls, as well as the small boys, belonged to the choir at Kalfermatt. We didn't find this at all disagreeable, and in this we were right. Whoever troubles to ask whether the seraphim who came down from heaven are of one sex or the other?

III

THANKS to its director, the organist Eglisak, the choir-school of our village had a great reputation. What a master of the tonic-sol-fa, and how cleverly he made us vocalise! How he taught us how to keep time, as well as the value of the different notes, tonality, modality and the composition of the scale! A great man, a great man, the worthy Eglisak. He was rumoured to be a musician of genius, a contra-

puntist without rival, and to have composed an extraordinary fugue, a fugue in four parts.

As we did not know too clearly what that was, one day we asked him.

'A fugue' he replied, holding his head up like the curved piece at the top of a double-bass.

'It's a piece of music?' I asked him.

'Of transcendental music, my boy.'

'How we'd like to hear it' exclaimed a young Italian, called Farina, endowed with a lovely alto voice which rose ... rose ... to Heaven.

'Yes' agreed a little German, Albert Hocht, whose voice sank down ... down ... into the depths of the earth.

'Come on, Mr. Eglisak?' the other boys and girls implored him.

'No, children. You shan't hear my fugue until it's finished.'

'And when will that be?' I asked.

'Never.'

As we stared at one another, he gave a gentle smile. 'A fugue never gets finished' he told us. 'You can always add new parts to it.'

So we had never heard the Eglisak's famous fugue, but he had put into music for our benefit a well-known psalm based on the notes of the scale.

And indeed when we sang this psalm people would have come from far away to hear it. As to what its strange words meant, nobody at the school knew, not even Mr. Valrügis. We thought it was Latin, but we weren't sure. And yet, so it seemed, this psalm would be sung at the Last Judgment, and then, most likely, the Holy Spirit, who speaks all languages, would translate it into the tongue of Eden.

Mr. Eglisak passed none the less as a great composer. Unfortunately he was afflicted with a most regrettable infirmity, and it was tending to grow worse. With age, he was getting hard of hearing. We realised this quite clearly, but he didn't want to admit it. Accordingly, so as not to annoy him, we shouted whenever we spoke to him, and our shrill voices were enough to split his ear-drums. But the hour was not far distant when he would become completely deaf.

That happened, one Sunday, at Vespers. The last psalm of Compline had been completed, and Eglisak, at the organ,

was at the mercy of his imagination. He played, and went on playing and never stopped. For fear of distressing him we dared not go away. But at last the blower, unable to do any more, came to a halt. The organ ran out of air . . . Eglisak never noticed it. Chords and arpeggios flowed or spread from his fingers. Not a sound was audible, and yet, in his artist's soul, he could still hear the music . . . At last we understood: some misfortune had just befallen him. Nobody dared point it out. And yet the blower had come down the narrow staircase from the organ-loft . . .

Eglisak didn't stop playing. And so it went on all the evening and all the next night; and even next day his fingers were still straying over the silent keyboard . . . He had to be led away . . . The poor man had at last to admit it. He was deaf. But that did not stop his completing his fugue. He would never hear it, that was all.

From that day onwards, the great organ no longer resounded in Kalfermatt Church.

IV

SIX MONTHS elapsed. November came, very cold. A white mantle covered the mountain and reached as far as the streets. We came into school with our noses red and our cheeks blue. At the corner of the square I waited for Betty. How pretty she looked with her hood pulled well down on her head!

'It's you, Joseph?' she greeted me.

'It's me, Betty. A bit nippy, this morning. Wrap yourself up well! Do up your coat . . .'

'Yes, Joseph. Shall we run?'

'That's the idea. Give me your books, I'll carry them. And mind you don't catch cold. It would be a real bit of bad luck if you were to lose your pretty voice' . . .

'Or if you lost yours, Joseph!'

It would certainly have been unlucky. So, after blowing on our fingers we ran as fast as our feet could carry us to warm ourselves up.

Fortunately it was warm in the class-room. The stove was roaring, and they did not spare the wood. There was plenty of it at the foot of the mountain, and it was the wind which undertook to get it down. How joyfully the branches crackled! We crowded round. Mr. Valrūgis sat upright in his chair, his fur hat pulled down almost to his eyes. Explosions resounded, like shots from an arquebus accompanying the story of William Tell. And I reflected that if Gessler had had only the one hat, he would be sure to catch a cold while it was stuck up on top of a pole, if all that took place in winter!

And then we worked well—reading, writing, arithmetic, recitation, dictation, and our schoolmaster was pleased. But my word, there wasn't any music! Nobody had been found able to replace old Eglisak. Sure enough, we were going to forget everything we had learned! What chance was there of another choir-master ever coming to Kalfermatt? Already out throats were rusting and so was the organ, and it would need repairs, repairs . . .

Our Curé did not hide his annoyance. Now that the organ wasn't there to accompany him, how he had to shout, poor man, especially at the opening of the Mass! Gradually his voice grew fainter, and when he reached the *supplici confessione dicentes*, he might just as well have hunted for the notes under his surplice, for he couldn't find them. That made some of the congregation laugh, but it distressed me—and Betty too. Nothing was so heart-rending as the services then. On All Saints' Day there hadn't been any good music, and here was Christmas coming with its *Gloria*, its *Adeste Fideles*, its *Exultet*! . . .

The Curé had tried one resort: to replace the organ by a serpent. At least with a serpent he wouldn't have to shout. The difficulty wasn't in finding this antediluvian instrument: there was one hanging on the sacristy wall, where it had been sleeping for years. But where could he find the serpentist? At any rate, couldn't he make use of the organ-blower, now out of work?

'Haven't you any breath?' the Curé asked him one day.

'Yes', the good fellow answered, 'with my blower, but not with my mouth.'

'What does that matter. Try and see . . .'

'I'll try.'

And he tried. He blew down the serpent, but the noise which came out of it was abominable. Was that his fault, or the wooden animal's? An insoluble problem. So the idea had to be given up, and the coming Christmas looked like being as melancholy as the previous All Saints' Day. For, failing Eglisak, we now had no organ, nor did we have a choir-master. Nobody to give us lessons, nobody to beat time. That was why the Kalfermattiens were in despair when, one evening, the whole village was thrown into a tumult.

This was on December 15th. It was a dry cold, one of those cold spells when sounds can be heard a long way off. A voice from the top of the mountain would reach the village; a pistol-shot fired at Kalfermatt would have been heard at Reichscharden, a good league away.

I was going to have supper one Saturday with Mr. Clère. No school tomorrow—when you've been working all the week, it's permissible, isn't it, to rest on Sunday? William Tell, too, had a right to knock off work, for he must have been tired after a week in Mr. Valrügis' harness.

The innkeeper's house looked over the little square, at its left corner, almost facing the church, whose weathercock could be heard creaking at the top of its pointed belfry. Clère had a dozen or so customers, mostly local people, and it had been arranged that evening that Betty and myself should sing one of Salviati's lovely nocturnes.

So, when supper was over and cleared away, and the chairs arranged, we were about to begin, when a distant sound reached our ears.

'What on earth's that?' somebody asked.

'Anybody would think it was coming from the church.' someone else suggested.

'But that's the organ! . . .'

'Nonsense! The organ playing itself? . . .'

Still, the sounds were clearly audible, now *crescendo*, now *dimuendo*, swelling out as though they were coming from the biggest of the instrument's bombardons.

In spite of the cold, somebody opened the inn door. The old church was quite dark, no light coming through the glass windows of the nave. No doubt the wind was whistling through some cranny in the wall? We were quite wrong; just as we were going back to our musical evening the phenomenon recurred, but this time with such intensity there could be no mistake about it.

'Somebody's playing in the church!' exclaimed Jean Clère.

'It's the devil, sure enough!' Jenny added.

'But does the devil know how to play the organ?' asked the innkeeper.

'And why not?' I thought to myself.

Betty grasped my hand. 'The devil?' she whispered.

By now the doors facing on the square are opening one by one, and people are appearing at the windows. They are asking about it. Somebody suggests 'Our Curé's found an organist and brought him along.'

How was it we hadn't thought of so simple an explanation? But just at that moment the Curé appears at the Presbytery door. 'What's happening?' he asks.

'Somebody's playing the organ, Sir.' the innkeeper shouts.

'Good! That's Eglisak back at his key-board.'

And, admittedly, being deaf wouldn't keep anyone from running his hands over the keys, and the old master might have taken it into his head to go back into the organ-loft with the blower. We'd have to go and look. But the church-door is shut.

'Joseph,' the Curé tells me 'run along to Eglisak's.'

I run along, still holding Betty's hand, for she didn't want to leave me.

Five minutes later we're back.

'Well?' the Curé asks me.

'The master's in his own house.' I gasp, out of breath.

It was quite true. His servant had told me that he was asleep in his bed like a deaf man, and that the din the organ was making hadn't wakened him.

'Then who can it be?' Mrs. Clère is not at all reassured.

'We'll soon find out!' the Curé buttons up his cloak.

The organ could still be heard, its sounds swelling forth like a tempest. The sixteen-foot pipes were roaring away: the great nasard was emitting its sonorous notes; even the thirtytwo-footers, the ones with the deepest tones, were sharing in that deafening concert. The square was, so to speak, swept by a musical blizzard. Anyone would have thought that the church was nothing but an immense organ-case, with its belfry as the bourdon, emitting its fantastic bass-notes.

I have already explained that the main door was shut; but we found that the small door, facing Clère's inn, was

half-open. It was by this that the trespasser had got in. First the Curé, and then the beadle, who had just joined him, made their way inside. As they went past, they dipped their fingers in the holy-water stoup as a precaution and crossed themselves. Then all the rest of us followed their example.

All at once the organ fell silent. The fragment which the mysterious organist had been playing stopped on a chord in the fourth and sixth which lost itself in the darkness of the vault.

Was it the sudden bursting-in of the crowd which had cut short the artiste's inspiration? There seemed reason to think so. But now the nave, so recently full of harmony, had fallen back into silence. I may well say silence, for we were speechless, standing there between the pillars, feeling a sensation like that which comes when, after a sudden flash of lightning, you wait for the thunder.

But that did not last. We had to know what to make of it. The beadle and two or three others of the bravest amongst us made their way to the spiral staircase which leads to the organ-loft in the depths of the nave. They went up its steps, but when they reached the gallery they found nobody. The cover of the key-board had been shut down. The blower, still half full of the air which now could find no exit, stayed motionless, its lever raised.

Most probably, taking advantage of the confusion and the darkness, the trespasser had made his way down the spiral stairway, vanished through the little door, and made his way across the village.

What matter! The beadle thought it would be as well to exorcise the church for prudence' sake. But the Curé objected, and in this he was right, for he would have had nothing for his exorcisms.

V

NEXT DAY Kalfermatt village included an additional inhabitant—or rather two. They could be seen walking about the square, coming and going along the high street, advancing towards the school, and at last returning to Clère's inn,

Here they engaged a double-bedded room, for a period which they did not specify.

'It might be for a day, a week, a month, or a year,' one of them had said. So Betty told me, when she had rejoined me on the square.

'And is he the organist who played yesterday?' I asked.

'Well, he could be, Joseph.'

'With his blower? ...'

'That must be the fat one' Betty explained

'But what sort of people are they?'

'Like everybody else.'

Like everybody else, that was clear enough, because they had one head on their shoulders, arms stuck on their bodies, feet at the end of their legs. But you could have all that and not be like anyone. And I realised this at once when, at about eleven, I at last caught sight of these very strange strangers.

They walked one behind the other.

The one about thirtyfive to forty years old, lean, gaunt, like a large-sized heron, defeathered with a great yellowish frock coat, his legs swathed in close-fitting trousers from which emerged his sharp-pointed feet, and he was capped by a large plumed bonnet. What a thin hairless face! His eyes, small but piercing, surrounded by wrinkles, with a fiery glow in the depths of their pupils, sharp white teeth, a pointed nose, a tightly-closed mouth, a nut-cracker chin. The fingers long, long . . . able to compass an octave and a half on the keyboard!

The other is thick-set in shoulders and bust, a large tousled head under a greyish felt hat, a face like an obstinate bull, a stomach in the key of *F*. He was a fellow of about thirty years old, and strong enough to beat the most vigorous men in the commune.

Nobody knew these individuals. It was the first time they had come into the country. Not Swiss, to be sure, but more likely to have come from the east, from beyond the mountains, on the Hungary side. And, indeed, as we learned later, this was so.

After paying a week in advance at Clère's inn, they had breakfasted with a good appetite, and not spared the dainties. And then they walked round, the taller one skipping about, looking here and there, fussing, singing, his hands

always in motion. He had a queer trick of slapping the nape of his neck with his hand and repeating:

'*Lah natural . . . lah natural! . . . Good!*'

The fatter one rolled on his haunches, smoking a pipe shaped like a saxophone and emitting torrents of whitish smoke.

I was looking at them with wide-open eyes when the big one noticed me and signed to me to come nearer.

My word, I was rather frightened, but at last I risked it, and he spoke to me in a voice like the falsetto of a child in the choir: 'The Curé's house, boy?'

'The Curé's . . . the presbytery?'

'Yes. Will you take me there?'

I thought that the Curé would reprimand me for having taken these people to him—especially the big one, whose glance fascinated me. I would have liked to refuse, but this was impossible, so there I was leading them towards the presbytery.

It was about fifty paces off. I pointed to the door and ran away, while the knocker struck three crochets followed by a black note.

Some of my friends were waiting for me on the square and Mr. Valrugis was with them. I explained what had happened. They stared at me . . . Just think of it! *He* had spoken to me!

But what I could tell them did not throw much light on the two men's purpose in coming to Kalfermatt. Why have a talk with the Curé? What sort of reception had he given them and hadn't some misfortune befallen him, as well as his servant, an old woman of canonical age now getting into her second childhood?

That afternoon everything was explained.

This queer fellow—the tall one—was called Effarane. He was an Hungarian, at once artiste, tuner, organ-vendor, organ-builder—as they say—undertaking repairs, and going from town to town to earn his living by this means.

It was he, we guessed, who, the previous evening after going in by the side door with that other man, his assistant and organ-blower, had awakened the echoes of the old church by releasing those storms of harmony. But according to him some parts of the instrument were defective and he offered to see to them quite cheaply. He had certificates testifying to his competence in this type of work.

'Do so! . . . Do so! . . .' the Curé had replied, in haste to accept the offer. Then he'd added: 'May Heaven be blessed that sent us an organ-builder with such qualifications, and three times blessed if it bestows upon us an organist . . .'

'So that poor fellow Eglisak? . . .' asked Mr. Effarane.

'As deaf as a post. You know him?'

'What! Who doesn't know the man with the fugue?'

'It's six months now that he hasn't been playing at the church nor teaching at school. So we had to hold our Mass without any music on All Saints' Day and perhaps at Christmas . . .'

'Don't worry, your reverence' Master Effarane replied. 'Within a fortnight those repairs will be finished and for Christmas, if you like, I'll take over the organ.' And as he spoke he waved his endless fingers, he cracked their joints, he pulled on them as though they were made of rubber.

The Curé thanked the artiste in suitable terms, and asked him what he thought of the organ at Kalfermatt.

'It's quite good' Master Effarane replied, 'but it isn't complete.'

'Well, what's missing, then? Hasn't it got twentyfour stops, not forgetting the *vox humana*?'

'Yes, but what's lacking, your reverence, to be precise, it's a register which I've invented, and which I want to endow these instruments with.'

'And what is that?'

'The register of children's voices' the strange fellow replied, drawing himself up to his full height. 'Yes, that's an improvement I've thought of. That will be the ideal, and then my name will outdo that of—' he rattled off a string of names.

The Curé must have thought that the list would go on until it was time for Vespers, which would not be long in coming.

And the organ-builder added, as he ruffled up his hair: 'And if I succeed with the Kalfermatt organ, nothing will ever be compared with it, not even those in St. Paul's, in London . . .' And he rattled off another string of names with an inspired look, his gestures tracing capricious curves. He would certainly have scared anybody except the Curé, who, by recourse to a few Latin words, could always reduce the devil himself to nothing.

Fortunately at that moment the vesper-bell rang out. Pick-

ing up his hat and straightening the plume with a light touch of his finger, Master Effarane bowed deeply, and went to join his blower on the square. But after he'd gone, that didn't keep the old servant from thinking she could smell an odour of sulphur.

The truth is that the stove was smoking.

VI

IT GOES without saying that henceforward there was no longer any doubt about the important question which convulsed the village. This great artiste who called himself Effarane, and who was also a great inventor, had pledged himself to enrich our organ by a register of children's voices. So, next Christmas, after the Shepherds and the Wise Men accompanied by trumpets, bourdons, and flutes, there would be heard the fresh crystal-clear voices of the Angels hovering like butterflies about the heads of the Christ Child and His divine Mother.

The repair works were begun next day, both Master Effarane and his assistant applying themselves to the task. During the hours of recreation, several others from the school came with me to watch them; we were allowed up in the organ-loft on the understanding that we didn't get in the way. The whole organ-case had been opened, reduced to the most primitive state.

An organ is nothing more than a set of pan-pipes connected to a wind-chest, with a blower and a register, a controller which regulates the admission of the wind. Ours is a large model including twentyfour main stops, four key-boards of fiftyfour keys, as well as a pedal key-board for the fundamental bass-notes in two octaves. How gigantic appear this forest of pipes with their reeds and mouths of wood or tin! We should have got lost in the midst of that dense undergrowth! And what queer names sprang to the lips of Master Effarane: doublets, flutes, cremornas, bombardons, the large diapasons, the great nasards! When I think about those wooden sixteen-footers and those thirty-

two-footers in tin! Amidst all those tubes you could have buried the whole school and Mr. Valügis as well!

We stared at these excavations with the sort of amazement that borders on fear.

'Henri' Hoch muttered, as he daringly glanced underneath them. 'It's like a steam engine . . .'

'No, it's more like artillery' Farina replied, 'like guns which fire musical cannon-balls.'

I myself couldn't find anything to compare them with. But when I thought of the tempests which the double bellows could send through that mass of tubing, I was taken with a fit of trembling that shook me for hours.

In the midst of the confusion Master Effarane worked without ever seeming at a loss. To tell the truth, the Kalfermatt organ was in fairly good condition and needed nothing more than a few trifling repairs, and the cleaning-off of several years' dust. What presented the most difficulty was the adjustment of the register of children's voices. There it was, in a box, a series of crystal flutes which ought to produce the most delicious sounds.

Master Effarane, as skilful an organ-maker as he was a wonderful organist, hoped at last to succeed here where he had failed elsewhere. All the same, as I realised, he was only groping about, trying now this and that, and when he found it didn't work crying out like an angry parrot tormented by its owner.

Brrrr . . . His cries sent shivers all over my body, and I felt my hairs standing up, as though they were electrified, on my head.

I must stress how very deeply I was affected. The inside of that huge organ-case, that enormous gutted animal with its internal organs exposed, tormented me until it became an obsession. I dreamed of it at night, and all day my thoughts kept flowing back to it. And above all the box of children's voices, which I would not have dared to touch, affected me like a cageful of children, which Master Effarane was bringing up to make them sing at a touch of the organist's fingers.

'What's the matter with you, Joseph?' Betty asked.

'I don't know' I answered.

'Maybe it's because you go up to the organ too often?'

'Yes . . . maybe.'

'Then don't go there any more, Joseph.'

'I shan't go there again, Betty.'

But in spite of myself I went back that very day. I felt I wanted to lose myself in the midst of that forest of pipes, to slip into its darkest corners, to follow Master Effarane when I heard his hammer tapping on the floor of the organ-case. I took good care not to say anything about this at home; father and mother would have thought I was mad.

VII

A WEEK before Christmas we were at our lessons one morning, the girls on one side, the boys on the other. Mr. Valrügis was enthroned in his chair; in her corner his old sister was knitting with long needles, like veritable wooden spits. And hardly had William Tell insulted Gessler's hat when the door opened.

It was the Curé who came in.

Everybody rose respectfully. But then, behind the Curé, appeared Master Effarane.

Everybody lowered their eyes before the organist's piercing gaze. What was he doing at the school, and why had the Curé come with him?

I fancied I could see that he was paying me especial attention. No doubt he'd recognised me, and I didn't feel at all easy.

Nonetheless Mr. Valrügis rose from his chair, advanced to meet his reverence and asked: 'To what do I owe this honour?'

'Mr. Principal, I would like to introduce Mr. Effarane to you. He wants a word with your pupils.'

'But why...'

'He asked me if we had a choir at Kalfermatt. I told him that we had, and I added that it was a splendid one when poor old Eglisak took charge of it. Then Master Effarane expressed a wish to hear it. So I brought him along this morning to ask you to be so good as to pardon the intrusion.'

Mr. Valrügis had no wish for apologies. Whatever his reverence did was well done. For once William Tell could wait.

And then, on a sign from Mr. Valrügis, we sat down. The

Curé in an armchair which I hastened to get, Master Effarane on the corner of the table, from which the girls hurriedly backed away to make room for him.

The nearest to him was Betty, and I could see quite well that the dear little thing was scared by his long hands and those fingers which kept describing aerial arpeggios so close to her.

Master Effarane opened the conversation and said in his piercing voice: 'Are these the children of the choir-school.'

'They don't all of them belong to it' Mr. Valrügis explained.

'How many do?'

'Sixteen.'

'Boys and girls?'

'Yes' replied the Curé 'boys and girls, and as at that age they've got the same voice...'

'That's quite a mistaken idea' Master Effarane broke in, 'and a connoisseur's ear couldn't possibly confuse them.'

Were we surprised to hear this? We certainly were: Betty's voice and my own were so very similar in tone that when we spoke nobody could distinguish between us. Later things would be different, for when the voice breaks it affects quite dissimilarly the tones of the two sexes.

Anyhow, this was not a matter which we could dispute before such a personage as Master Effarane, so all of us took it for granted.

'Let the children from the choir-school come to the front' he ordered, lifting his arm like the baton of the conductor of an orchestra.

Eight boys, of which I was one, and eight girls, of which one was Betty, came and arranged ourselves in two rows, facing one another. And then Master Effarane inspected us much more carefully than had ever been done in the time of Eglisak. We had to open our mouths and put out our tongues, take deep breaths in and out, and show him our vocal cords in the depths of our throats; he seemed to want to pinch them with his fingers. I felt that he was going to tune us as though we were violins or 'cellos. My word, not one of us felt the least bit reassured.

His reverence, Mr. Valrügis, and his old sister were there, dumbfounded but not daring to say a word.

'Attention!' Master Effarane spoke sharply. 'The major scale, if you please. Here's the fundamental.'

The fundamental? I expected that he would produce from his pocket a little contrivance with two stems, like the one the good Eglisak had used, and whose vibrations gave the official *lah* at Kalfermatt as everywhere else.

But now we got another shock.

Master Effarane simply lowered his head, and with the knuckle of his bent thumb he gave a sharp rap to the base of his skull.

Oh, what a surprise! His top vertebra gave forth a metallic sound, and that was the exact sound of *lah*, with its eight hundred and seventy normal vibrations.

'Attention' he repeated. 'And now for the song!'

And there we were, sol-fa-ing along the *doh* scale, first upwards then downwards.

'Very bad . . . very bad . . .' Master Effarane exclaimed when the last note had died away. 'I can hear sixteen different voices, and I only ought to hear one.'

To my mind, he was showing himself needlessly difficult, for we were used to singing in unison very accurately, and we were always being complimented on it.

Master Effarane shook his head, and threw dissatisfied glances to right and left. I fancied that he could move his ears, and that they were twitching like those of the cats and dogs and other animals.

'Now start again!' he told us 'and one after another this time. Each of you must have his own personal note, his physiological note so to speak, and the only one he ought ever to give in a choir.'

His only note—physiological! And what might that word mean? Well, I would like to have known what his own was, this oddity—as well as that of the Curé who had quite a fine collection of them, and each of them more out of tune than the others!

We began, not without some apprehension—this terrible man, mightn't he be going to punish us?—and not without some curiosity to know what were own personal notes, the ones we were going to cultivate in our throats like plants in a flower-pot.

It was Hocht who began, and after he had tried all the different notes in the scale the *soh* was declared by Master Effarane to be his personal note, the most thrilling of all which his larynx could emit.

After Hocht it was Farina's turn, and he saw himself condemned to *lah natural* forever.

Then the rest of my comrades were subjected to this rigorous examination, and their favourite note was granted Master Effarane's seal of approval.

Then I stepped forward.

'Oh, it's you, youngster!' said the organist. And taking me by the head, he turned it backwards and forwards until I began to be afraid he'd end by screwing it off. 'Let's have your note,' he continued.

I went up the scale from *doh* to *doh* and down again. Master Effarane didn't seem at all satisfied. He told me to start again . . . That wouldn't do . . . That wouldn't do. I was deeply mortified. Me, one of the best in the choir school, was I to be deprived of my own personal note?

'Come on!' Master Effarane exclaimed. 'The chromatic scale. Perhaps I'll find your note in that.'

And my voice, proceeding by intervals of a semitone, went up the octave.

'Good . . . good!' the organist decided. 'I've got your note, and you've got to keep it throughout the melody!'

'And it's?' I asked a little unsteadily.

'It's *Ray Sharp*.'

And I held this *Ray Sharp* for a whole breath.

His reverence and Mr. Valrügis didn't disdain to make signs of satisfaction.

'Now the girls' turn!' Master Effarane told them.

And there was I thinking: 'If only Betty can have the *Ray Sharp* too! That wouldn't surprise me, for our two voices blend together so well!'

The little girls were tested one after the other. This one had the *Te natural* and that one the *Me natural*. When it was Betty Cleré's turn to sing, she was very scared as she stood before Master Effarane.

'Go ahead, child.'

And she raised her voice, so sweet, so well modulated that anyone would have thought a goldfinch were singing. But there, Betty found herself in the same position as her friend Joseph Müller. Recourse had to be had to the chromatic scale to find her note, and the upshot was that the note attributed to her was *Me flat*.

At first I was annoyed, but on reflection I could only

applaud this decision. Betty had the *Me flat* and I had the *Ray sharp*.

'What's the matter with you, youngster?' the organist knitted his brows.

'I'm so very pleased, Sir,' I mustered up my courage to tell him, 'because Betty and I have got the same note.'

He straightened himself up so much that his arms touched the ceiling.

'The same note!' he repeated. 'Oh, so you think that a *Rap sharp* and a *Me flat* are the same note, ignoramus that you are, ass's ears that you deserve! . . . Was it your Eglisak who taught you nonsense like that? And you put up with that, Curé? . . . And you too, schoolmaster? . . . And you too, old lady . . .'

Mr. Valrügis' sister picked up an ink-pot to throw it at his head. But he went on, completely in the grip of his outburst of temper.

'You little wretch, so you don't know what a comma is, the eighth part of a tone which differentiates between *Ray sharp* and *Me flat*, *Lah sharp* and *Te flat*, and so on? Oh, isn't anybody here able to distinguish an eighth of a tone? Aren't there anything but hard shrivelled burst eardrums in the ears of all Kalfermatt? '

Nobody dared stir. The very glass in the windows trembled at the bitter voice of Master Effarane. I was distressed to have provoked this scene, sad to learn that between Betty's voice and my own there was that difference, even if it were only an eighth of a tone. His Reverence was staring at me, Mr. Valrügis was looking at me askance . . .

But the organist suddenly calmed down, and said: 'Attention! And each to his own place in the scale! '

We realised what that meant, and we arranged ourselves in order of our personal notes, Betty in the fourth place by virtue of being *Me flat* and me next to her, just after her, in my capacity of *Ray sharp*. That was as much as to say that we represented a pan-pipe, or rather the pipes of an organ, with the only notes that we could give.

'The chromatic scale' Master Effarane told us 'and correctly. Or else! . . .'

We didn't have to be told twice. Our comrade to whom the *doh* was assigned began; another followed; Betty gave her *Me flat* and I my *Ray sharp*, and the organist's ears

seemed to appreciate the difference. After going up the scale we came down, and this we did three times.

Master Effarane himself seemed fairly satisfied. 'Good, children!' he exclaimed. 'I'll end by making a living keyboard of you!' And as the Curé nodded with rather an unconvinced air he continued. 'Why not? They've been able to make a piano with cats, cats chosen because of the yowl they gave when somebody pinched their tails! A cat piano, a cat piano!' he repeated.

We began to laugh, without really understanding whether he were speaking seriously or not. But later on I learned that he had told the truth when he had spoken about a piano of cats which miaowed when their tails were pinched by machinery. Good Lord! What won't they invent next!

Then putting on his bonnet, Master Effarane bowed, turned on his heels and went out saying: 'Don't forget your notes—especially you, Mr. *Ray sharp* and you too, Miss *Me flat*!'

And those surnames stuck to us

VIII

THAT WAS how Master Efferane visited Kalfermatt school. His visit made a very strong impression upon me, and I felt that a *Ray sharp* kept vibrating in the depths of my throat.

Meanwhile the work on the organ progressed. Another week, and it would be Christmas. All the time I had to spare I spent up in the organ-loft: the feeling was too strong for me. I even did my best to help the organist and his blower, but you could hardly get a word out of them. Now the registers were in perfect condition, the blower all ready to work, the organ-case as good as new, its metal-work gleaming in the shadows of the nave. Yes, all was prepared for the festival, except for the famous apparatus containing the children's voices.

Indeed, it was there that things were held up, and this was obviously in spite of all that Master Effarane could do. He tried and tried again . . . But nothing came of it. I did not know what was wrong with his register, and no more did

he. Hence a disappointment that expressed itself in great outbursts of temper. He kept laying the blame on the organ, on the blower, on the man who did the blowing, and on the poor *Ray sharp*, who certainly couldn't help it! At times I thought he was going to smash everything up, and I hurriedly cleared out . . . And what would the people of Kalfermatt say when their hopes were disappointed, and if the great yearly festival were not celebrated with all the pomp it deserved?

It mustn't be forgotten, either, that the choir would not sing this Christmas, for it was completely disorganised, so we should be reduced to the organ music.

To be brief, the solemn day arrived. During the last twentyfour hours Master Effarane, more and more disappointed, had let his temper get the better of him so much that one might fear for his reason. Would he really have to give up those children's voices? I didn't know, and by now I was so scared that I dared not set foot in the organ-loft, or even in the church.

On Christmas Eve it was the custom for the children to go to bed at dusk, and to sleep right on until just before the service. This enabled them to stay awake during the Midnight Mass. So, that evening, after school, I saw to her home the little *Me flat*—That was what I'd come to call her.

'You won't miss the service?' I asked her.

'No, Joseph—and don't forget your prayer-book.'

'You needn't worry about that!'

I went on home, where they were expecting me.

'You're going to bed' mother told me.

'All right' I replied, 'but I don't feel like sleeping.'

'That doesn't matter!'

'But . . .'

'Do what your mother tells you' father said sharply, 'and we'll wake you when it's time for you to get up.'

I obediently kissed my parents and went up to my room. My clean clothes were set out ready on the back of a chair, and my newly-polished shoes by the door. There was nothing for me to do except to jump into bed, after I'd washed my face and hands.

As soon as I was between the sheets I put out the candle, but it was still half-light because of the snow which covered the neighbouring roofs.

It goes without saying that I was no longer at the age for

putting my shoe in the hearth, in the hopes of finding a Christmas present in it, but I reflected that those had been the good times, and that they would never come back. Last time, three or four years ago, my dear *Me flat* had found a pretty silver cross in her slipper . . . Don't say anything, but it was I who put it there!

Then these happy memories faded from my mind. I remembered Master Effarane. I could see him beside me, his long cloak, his long legs, his long hands, his long face . . . In vain I hid my head under the pillow, I could still see him, I could feel his fingers running along the bed . . .

In short, after having tossed and turned, I managed to fall asleep.

How long was I asleep? I really don't know. But suddenly I was brusquely aroused: a hand was resting on my shoulder.

'Come on, *Ray sharp!*' came a voice which I recognised.

It was the voice of Master Effarane.

'Come on now, *Ray sharp* . . . it's time . . . Do you want to be late for Mass?'

I listened without understanding anything.

'Do I have to drag you out of bed, like pulling a loaf out of the oven?'

The bedclothes were thrown back. I opened my eyes, which were dazzled by the light of a lamp held in a hand . . .

How frightened I was! . . . It really was Master Effarane there before my eyes.

'Come on, *Ray sharp*, get your clothes on.'

'Get my clothes on?' . . .

'Unless you want to attend Mass in your night-shirt!'
Can't you hear the bell?'

And indeed it was clanging out wildly.

'Now tell me, *Ray sharp*, are you going to get your clothes on?'

Almost without realising it I was dressed in less than a minute. True enough, Master Effarane had helped me, and whenever he did anything he did it quickly.

'Come on' he said, picking up the lantern.

'But father and mother . . . ' I asked.

'They're at the church already.'

I was amazed that they hadn't waited for me. Anyhow, we go down. The front door opens, then closes and there we are out in the street.

What a dry cold! The square is white, the sky spangled with stars. Beyond stands out the church, with its belfry, whose top seems to be lighted by a star.

I follow Master Effarane. But instead of going straight to the church, there he is going along the streets, now this way and now that. He stops in front of some of the houses, and their doors open without his having to knock. My comrades come out, clad in their best clothes, Hoct, Farina, all who belong to the choir. Then its the turn of the girls, and first of all, my little *Me flat*. She grasps my hand.

'I'm frightened!' she says.

I dare not say 'So am I!' for fear of frightening her even more. At last there are all of us there. All of those who have their own personal notes, indeed the whole chromatic scale!

But what is the organist going to do? For want of his apparatus with the children's voices, does he want to form a register with the children in the choir?

Whether we want to or no, we have to obey this amazing person, like musicians obeying their conductor when the baton quivers in his hand. Here's the side-door of the church. We enter it two by two. So far there's nobody in the nave, which is cold, dark, silent. And he had told me that father and mother were waiting for me! . . . I ask him about it, I dare to ask him.

'Be quiet, *Ray sharp*' is his only reply 'and help little *Me flat* up.'

That's what I do. Here we are, all of us, on the narrow spiral staircase, and we reach the step into the organ-loft. It suddenly lights up. The keyboard has been opened, the blower is at his post—anybody would think it was swollen with every wind that blows, it's got so big!

On a gesture from Master Effarane, we get into order. He raises his hand. The organ-case opens, then it closes on us.

All sixteen of us, we are shut up in the pipes of the *grand jeu*, each of us by himself, but next to one another. Betty finds herself in the fourth place, by virtue of being *Me flat*, with me in the fifth in my capacity of *Ray sharp*! So I had guessed what Master Effarane had in mind. No doubt about it. Not having been able to fix up his apparatus, he had used the children of the choir to make up his register of children's voices, and when the air reaches us by the mouths of the pipes, we shall each emit our notes! It isn't cats, it's

me, it's Betty, it's all my comrades, who are going to be activated by the organ-keys!

'You're there, Betty?' I exclaimed.

'Yes, Joseph.'

'Don't be afraid, I'm here beside you.'

'Silence!' came the voice of Master Effarane.

And we were silent.

IX

BUT THE church has almost filled up. Through the slit in the reed of my pipe I could see the host of the faithful extending across the nave, which was now brightly lit up. And those families who don't realise that sixteen of their children are shut up inside the organ! I could hear quite clearly the sound of steps on the floor of the nave, the clatter of chairs, the clicking of the shoes and pattens, strangely sonorous as they always are in churches. The faithful were taking their places for the Midnight Mass, and the bell kept on clanging.

'You're still there?' I asked Betty again.

'Yes, Joseph' came a little trembling voice.

'Don't be afraid . . . don't be afraid, Betty! . . . We're only here for the service . . . Then they'll let us out.'

But in my heart I didn't think anything of the sort. Never would Effarane let the birds he had caged take flight, and he would know how to hold us in his diabolical grip for a very long time . . . Perhaps forever!

At last there came the sound of the choir bell. His Reverence and his two acolytes reach the altar steps. The ceremony is about to begin.

But how was it our parents weren't anxious about us? I could see father and mother in their usual places, quite unconcerned—Unconcerned too were Mr. and Mrs. Clère—Unconcerned, the families of our comrades. It was inexplicable.*

And I was puzzling over this when a tempest swept across the organ-case. All the pipes shivered like a forest in a gale. The blower was working at full blast.

Master Effarane had begun while he waited for the *In-*

troit. The keys, even those of the pedal-keyboard, moved with a sound like the rolling of thunder. It ended with an impressive final chord, supported by the bass of the thirty-two feet bourdons. Then the priest intoned the *Introit*. And, at the *Gloria*, a new attack by Master Effarane with the brilliant register of the trumpets.

I listened, terrified, for the moment when the tempests of the bellows would rush into our own pipes; but the organist was no doubt keeping them for later on in the service . . .

After the Prayer comes the Epistle. After the Epistle, the *Gradual*, ended by two superb *Alleluias* accompanied by the *grand jeu*.

And then the organ fell silent for the Gospel and the sermon, during which His Reverence congratulates the organist on having restored to Kalfermatt Church its silent voices . . .

Oh, if only I could cry out, send my *Ray sharp* through the slit in the pipe! . . .

Now it is the Offertory, and an admirable prelude by Master Effarane, with dispons and the flutes supporting the doublets. It was magnificent, that had to be admitted. In its harmonies, with their inexpressible charm, the heavens are rejoicing, and the celestial choirs seem to be chanting the glory of the Divine Child.

This lasts five minutes, which felt to me like five centuries, for I had a presentiment that the turn of the children's voices would come at the moment of the Elevation. It is for this that the great artistes reserve the most sublime improvisations of their genius . . .

But indeed I am more dead than alive. I feel that never will a note come from my throat, dried up as it is by the horror of having to wait. But I was reckoning without the irresistible blast which would inflate me, when the key which brought me into action would sink beneath the organist's finger.

At last it came, that long-dreaded Elevation. The bell can be heard with its shrill ringing. A silence, that of meditation, reigns throughout the church. The heads bow low, while the two acolytes support the priest's chasuble . . .

Well, although I was a pious child, I'm in no mood for meditating. All I can think of is the storm about to be released under my feet! And then, very softly, so that nobody else can hear me: 'Betty?' I say.

'What is it, Joseph?'

'Look out, it's going to be our turn!'

'Oh, Jesus, Mary!' exclaims the poor little thing.

I have made no mistake. A dry noise can be heard. It is the sound of the regulator which directs the flow of air into the wind-chest connected to the register of childish voices. A melody, sweet and piercing, flies up beneath the vaulted roof of the church at the moment when the Divine Mystery is accomplished. I can hear the *soh* of Hoct, the *lah* of Farina; then it is the *Me flat* of my dear next-door neighbour, then an air-current inflates my chest, a current skilfully controlled, which carries the *Ray sharp* out of my lips. I want to be silent, but I cannot. I am nothing but an instrument in the organist's hands. His touch upon the keyboard is like a valve opening in my heart . . .

Oh, how excruciating it is! No, if it keeps on like this, the sounds that we emit will be no longer musical notes, they will be cries, cries of pain! . . . And how can I depict the torture I feel when Master Effarane plays with his terrible hand a chord of the diminished seventh in which I take the second place, *doh natural*, *ray sharp*, *fah sharp*, *lah natural*! . . .

And as the cruel, the merciless artiste prolongs it interminably, I fall into a faint, I feel that I'm dying, and I lose consciousness . . .

And this means that this famous diminished seventh, now devoid of its *Ray sharp* can no longer be resolved according to the rules of harmony . .

X

' . . . WELL, WHAT'S the matter with you? ' father asked.

' Me . . . I . . . '

' Come on, wake up, it's time to go to church . . . '

' Time . . . ? '

' Yes . . . out of bed with you, or you'll be too late for Mass, and as you know very well, no Mass, no supper! . . . '

Where was I? What had happened? Was all that nothing but a dream? . . . imprisonment in the organ-pipes, the epi-

sode at the Elevation, my heart breaking, my throat no longer able to emit its *Ray sharp* . . . Yes, children, from the moment when I had fallen asleep to the moment when father had just wakened me, I had dreamed everything, thanks to my imagination, over-excited as it was beyond all measure.

'Master Effarane?' I asked.

'Master Effarane is in church' father replied. 'Mother will be there by now . . . Come on, are you ever going to get dressed?'

I dressed myself, but, as though I were drunk, that torturing interminable diminished seventh still ringing in my ears.

I reached the church. I saw all of them in their usual place, Mr. and Mrs. Clère, my dear little Betty, well muffled up, for it was very cold. The bell was still ringing behind the louvre-boards of the belfry, and I could hear the last of its peals.

The priest, clad in the vestments of the great festivals, came before the altar, waiting for the organ to break forth into a triumphal march.

But how amazing! Instead of emitting its majestic chords which ought to precede the *Introit*, the organ was silent. Nothing! Not a note!

The beadle went up to the organ-loft . . . Master Effarane was not there. They looked for him . . . In vain. Vanished, the organist. Vanished with his blower. Furious, no doubt, at not having been able to instal his register of children's voices, he had left the church and the village without even claiming his pay. And, indeed, he was never seen again at Kalfermatt.

I must say, children, I was not at all sorry, for if I had too much of that weird person, far from being quit for a dream, I should have gone so mad I'd have to be put in a padded cell.

And if he'd gone mad, Mr. *Ray sharp* would not have been able, ten years later, to marry Miss *Me flat*—a marriage, if ever there was one, blessed by Heaven. Which shows that in spite of the difference of an eighth of a tone, a 'comma', as Master Effarane called it, married life can go along quite happily all the same.

THE ETERNAL ADAM

This long-short story, 'The Eternal Adam', is believed to be the last of Verne's works; afflicted with cataract, he dictated it almost from his death-bed. The editor of 'Hier et Demain', in which the original was included, contrasts its pessimism with the proud optimism of the author's earlier writings. But though in his last years Verne had lost his former confidence in human progress, he was still sustained by his religious faith.

This story contrasts, too, with the modern developments of the science fiction which he had founded. A writer of to-day would give some explanation of the catastrophe which Verne is content to describe, and would probably assign it to the unjoyous results of some atomic explosion. This could also be made to account for the remarkable biological developments which Verne glances at, as being the result of mutations which the radiation produced. As to one aspect of the disaster which Verne practically ignores, the emotional relationships within a community consisting of twentysix men and only four women, what modern writer would be able to keep his hands off that?

All the other British admirers of Verne will, I feel, share my satisfaction that in this, his final masterpiece, he forgot those aspects of our national culture which he so much disliked and remembered those which he had always so much admired.

ZARTOG SOFR-AI-SR—meaning ‘Doctor, third male representative of the hundred and first generation in the Sofr Family’—was slowly following the principal street of Basidra, the capital of the Hars-Iten-Schu—otherwise known as ‘The Empire of the Four Seas.’

Four seas, indeed: the Tubélone or northern, the Ehone or southern, the Spone or eastern, and the Mérone or western. They bounded that vast irregularly-shaped country, whose most remote points—to use the means of reckoning familiar to the reader—lay respectively in longitude 14°E and 72°W , and in latitude 51°N and 55°S .^{*} As for the size of these seas, how was it to be calculated, even approximately, for they all merged together, so that a seaman leaving any one of their shores and always following a straight course was bound to reach the shore diametrically opposite? For nowhere on the surface of the globe did there exist any land other than the Hars-Iten-Schu.

Sofr walked slowly, partly because it was very warm; the torrid season was beginning, and on Basidra, situated on the edge of the Spone-Schu, or Eastern Sea, less than 20°N of the Equator, a terrible cataract of rays was falling from the sun, then almost in the zenith.

But not only lassitude and the heat but also the weight of his thoughts slowed the step of Sofr, the savant Zartog. As he wiped his forehead with a heedless hand he recalled the session held the previous evening, when so many eloquent orators, among whom he had the honour of being counted, had magnificently celebrated the hundred and ninetyfifth anniversary of their empire’s foundation.

Some had reviewed its history, which was that of all mankind. They had described the Mahart-Iten-Schu, the Land of the Four Seas, as divided at first between an immense number of savage peoples who knew nothing of one another.

^{*}From the neighbourhood of Berlin to near Cape Horn.—I. O. E.

It was to them that the most ancient traditions went back. As to what had gone before, nobody knew anything, and the natural sciences had hardly begun to throw a gleam of light into the impenetrable shadows of the past. Certainly those far-distant times evaded critical history, whose earliest vestiges consisted of vague notions regarding these age-old scattered peoples.

For more than eight thousand years, the history of the Mahart-Iten-Schu, gradually getting more complete and more exact, described only conflicts and wars, at first of individual against individual, then of family against family, then of tribe against tribe. Each living creature, each community, small or large, had throughout the course of the ages no other objective than to ensure its own supremacy over its competitors and to strive, with varying and often contradictory fortunes, to subject them to its laws.

After these eight thousand years, human memory had become somewhat more precise. At the opening of the second of the four great ages into which the annals of the Mahart-Iten-Schu were commonly divided, legend had begun appropriately to merit the name of history. Nonetheless, history or legend, the subject-matter of the story hardly changed at all: always massacres and slaughters—no longer, admittedly, of tribe by tribe but henceforth of people by people—so much so, indeed, that on the whole this second period was not so very different from the first.

And it was still the same with the third period which, after having lasted nearly six centuries, had ended hardly two hundred years ago. More atrocious still perhaps, this third period during which, grouped into countless armies, mankind, with its insatiable rage, had watered the earth with its own blood.

Somewhat less than eight centuries, indeed, before the day on which Zartog Sofr was following the principal street of Basidra, humanity had been rent by vast convulsions. Then weapons, fire, violence, having already accomplished much of their inevitable work and the weak having succumbed to the strong, the people of the Mahart-Iten-Schu had formed three distinct nations, in each of which time had lessened the differences between the conquerors and the conquered of the past.

Then it was that one of these nations had undertaken to subdue its neighbours. Situated near the centre of the

Mahart-Iten-Schu, the Andarti-Hai-Sammgor, the Men of the Brazen Face, had struggled mercilessly to enlarge their frontiers, within which their spirited and prolific race was being choked.

One after the other, at the cost of age-long wars, they had overcome the Andarti-Mahart-Horis, the Men of the Snow Country, who inhabited the southern lands, and the Andarti-Mitra-Psul, the Men of the Motionless Star, whose empire was situated more towards the north and the west.

Nearly two hundred years had elapsed since the final revolt of these two peoples had been drowned in torrents of blood, and the land had at last known an era of peace. This was the fourth period of its history. One solitary empire having replaced the three nations of olden time, and the law of Basidra having been enforced everywhere, political unity had tended to merge the races. No longer was anything said about the men with the Brazen Faces, the men of the Snow Country, the Men of the Motionless Star. The earth now bore only one unique populace, the Andart'-Iten-Schu, the Men of the Four Seas, which in itself included all the others.

But now, after these two hundred years of peace, a fifth period seemed to be opening. For some time disquieting rumours, arising nobody knew where, had been going the rounds. They suggested that certain thinkers were trying to arouse in the human heart ancestral memories long believed to have been abolished. The ancient emotions of the race were being revived in a novel form characterised by newly-coined words. People were now speaking of 'atavism' 'affinities', 'nationalities', and so forth—all recently-coined terms which, answering as they did to some new need, had now gained recognition.

Based upon common origin, physical appearance, moral tendency, mutual interest, or simply upon district or climate, groups were appearing, and they were obviously getting larger and showing signs of unrest. Where would this growing evolution lead? Would the empire, scarcely formed though it was, start falling to pieces? Would the Mahart-Iten-Schu be divided, as of old, between a large number of nations? Or would it, to maintain its unity, have to seek recourse to the frightful hecatombs which, lasting for thousands of years, have turned the earth into a charnel-house?

With a shake of the head Sofer cast off these thoughts. The future was something which neither he nor anyone else

could possibly know. So why depress himself by the prospect of uncertain events? This was no day to brood over these sinister possibilities. Today everybody was in a cheerful mood, and nothing was thought about except the august grandeur of Mogar-Si, twelfth emperor of the Hars-Iten-Schu, whose sceptre was leading the universe to its glorious destiny.

What was more, a zartog by no means lacked grounds for rejoicing. Not only had the historian retraced the pageant of the Mahart-Iten-Schu; a constellation of savants, to mark this grandiose anniversary, had, each in his own specialty, drawn up the balance-sheet of human knowledge, and had announced the point to which its age-long efforts had brought mankind. And if the former had to some extent aroused distressing thoughts by recalling by what a slow and tortuous route it had freed itself from its bestial origin, the others had stimulated their hearers' legitimate pride.

Yes, in very truth, it was bound to inspire admiration, the comparison between what man had been when he arrived naked and helpless upon the earth and what he was today. Throughout the centuries, in spite of discords and fratricidal hates, never for one instant had he interrupted his struggle against nature; ever had he increased the scope of his victory.

At first slow, during the last two hundred years his triumphant march had been astonishingly accelerated; and the stability of political institutions and the universal peace which this had produced had stimulated a marvellous advance in science. Humanity lived not only by its limbs but by its mind; instead of exhausting itself in senseless wars, it had thought,—and that was why, in the course of the last two centuries, it had advanced ever more rapidly towards knowledge and the taming of material nature.

So, as beneath the scorching sun he followed the long Basidran street, Sofr mentally sketched in bold outline the picture of the conquests man had made.

First of all—though this was lost in the darkness of time—mankind had invented writing, so as to perpetuate his thoughts. Then—the invention went back more than five hundred years—he had found a method of spreading the written word far and wide in an endless number of copies by the aid of a block cast once and for all. It was really from this invention that all the others had sprung. It was thanks

to this that so many brains had come into action, that the intelligence of each had grown from that of his neighbour, and that discoveries, both theoretical and practical, had so greatly multiplied that they could no longer be counted.

Man had penetrated into the bowels of the earth and had extracted its coal, the generous donor of heat; he had liberated the latent power of water, so that steam now drew the heavy trains along the iron rails or drove a host of machines, as powerful as they were delicate and precise. Thanks to these machines, he could weave the vegetable fibres and do what he pleased with metal, marble or rock.

In a realm that was less concrete or at all events of less direct and immediate utility, he had gradually unravelled the mystery of numbers and entered ever more deeply into the infinity of mathematical truth. By this means his thought had penetrated into the sky . . . He knew that the sun was nothing but a star gravitating through space according to rigorous laws, dragging with its flaming orb its escort of the seven planets.* He understood the art both of combining certain natural bodies into new substances with which they had nothing in common, and of dividing certain other bodies into their constituent and primordial elements. He had subjected to analysis sound, heat and light, and was beginning to realise their nature and their laws.

Fifty years ago he had learned how to generate that force whose most terrifying manifestations are lightning and thunder, and he had at once made it his slave. Already that mysterious agent transmitted the written thought over incalculable distances; tomorrow it would transmit sound, and next day, no doubt, the light† . . . Yes, man was great, greater than the immense universe of which, on some day yet to come, he would be the master . . .

But for him to possess the truth in its integrity, one last problem remained to be solved. 'This man, master of the world, who was he? Whence came he? To what unknown ends did his tireless efforts lead?'

It was precisely this vast subject that Zartog Sofr had just discussed during the ceremony from which he had emerged. Admittedly he had done no more than to skim over its sur-

*The Andart'-Iten-Schu thus knew nothing of Neptune.

†It will be seen that, at the time when Zartog Sofr-Ai-Sr was indulging in these reflections, though the Andart'-Iten-Schu knew the telegraph, they were still ignorant of the telephone and the electric light.

face, for such a problem was at the moment insoluble and would no doubt long remain so.

Yet a few vague gleams had already begun to throw light upon the mystery. And of all these gleams was it not Zartog Sofr who had thrown the most powerful when, by systematising and codifying the patient observations of his predecessors and of himself, he had arrived at his law of the evolution of living matter, a law universally accepted and which had found nobody whatever to contradict it?

This theory rested upon a threefold base.

First there was the science of geology which, born on the day when the bowels of the earth had first been dug into, had reached perfection through the development of mining technique. The earth's crust was now so perfectly known that they had dared to fix its age at four hundred thousand years, and that of Mahart-Iten-Schu, as it was now, at twenty thousand years. This continent had formerly slept beneath the waters of the sea, as was testified to by the thick layer of marine silt which interruptedly covered the rocky beds immediately below. By what force had it been lifted above the waves? Doubtless by the contraction of the cooling globe. But whatever the truth about that, the elevation of Mahart-Iten-Schu from the sea must be regarded as proved.

The natural sciences had furnished Sofr with the two other foundations of his system, by making clear the close interrelationship on the one hand of the plants, on the other of the animals. He had gone still further: he had proved from the available evidence that almost all the plants still in existence were connected with their ancestor, a seaweed, and that all the animals of earth or air were descended from those of the sea. By a slow but incessant evolution, they had gradually adapted themselves to living conditions at first resembling, then more distant from, those of their primitive life. Thus, from stage to stage, they had given birth to most of the living beings which peopled earth and sky.

But this ingenious theory was unfortunately not unassailable. That living beings of the animal or vegetable orders had descended from marine ancestors, that seemed incontestable for almost all of them, but not for all. There still indeed existed a few plants and animals which it seemed impossible to connect with the aquatic types. That was one of the two weak points of his system.

The other weak point—and Sofr never concealed this—was

mankind. Between man and the animals there was no point of union. Certainly their primordial functions and properties—such as respiration, nutrition, and movement—were similar and were obviously carried out or showed themselves in a similar manner, but an impassable gulf existed between the exterior forms, the number, and the arrangement of their organs. If, by a chain of which few of the links were missing, the great majority of the animals could be associated with their ancestors from the sea, no such affiliation was admissible as regards man. To preserve the theory of evolution intact, the truth of a hypothesis had to be assumed gratuitously, that of a stock common to the inhabitants of the waters and to man, a stock of which nothing, absolutely nothing, demonstrated the former existence.

At one time Sofr had hoped to find in the ground the arguments that favoured his predilection. At his instigation and under his direction, digging had been carried out over a long succession of years, but only to lead to results diametrically opposed to those he had hoped for.

Below a thin layer of humus formed by the decomposition of plants and animals like or similar to those of every day, there had come the thick bed of silt, and in this these vestiges of the past had changed in nature. Within this silt, no more of the contemporary flora or fauna, but a quantity of fossils exclusively marine resembling types which were still living, most of them in the oceans surrounding the Mahart-Iten-Schu.

What was to be inferred from this, if it were not that the geologists were right in stating that the continent had once served as the floor of those same oceans? And that neither had Sofr been wrong in affirming the marine origin of the contemporary fauna and flora? Since, but for exceptions so rare that they might rightly be regarded as monstrosities, the aquatic and terrestrial forms were the only ones of which any trace had been found, the latter must necessarily have been engendered by the former . . .

Unfortunately for the generalisation of the system, other finds were made. Scattered throughout the whole thickness of the humus, and even in the most superficial part of the deposit of silt, innumerable human bones were brought to the daylight. Nothing exceptional in the structure of these fragmentary skeletons, and Sofr had to give up asking for the

intermediate organisms whose existence his theory asserted: these bones were human bones, neither more nor less.

However one fairly remarkable peculiarity was not slow to be realised. Up to a certain antiquity, which could be roughly evaluated as two or three thousand years, the older the ossuaries were the smaller the skulls within them. Beyond that epoch, on the other hand, progress was reversed and thenceforward the further one went back into the past, the bigger was the capacity of the skulls, and the larger therefore were the brains which they had held.

The very largest were found among the debris, somewhat scanty to be sure, found on the surface of the layer of silt. The conscientious examination of these venerable remains admitted of no doubt that the men living at that distant epoch had a cerebral development far superior to that of their successors—including the very contemporaries of Zartog Sofr. So that, during a period of a hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy centuries, there had been an obvious retrogression, followed by a new ascent.

Disturbed by these strange facts, Sofr pushed his researches further. The bed of silt was dug through and through; its thickness showed that at the most moderate computation it could not have taken less than fifteen or twenty thousand years to form. Beyond, much surprise was felt at the discovery of the scanty remains of another layer of humus. Then, below that humus, there was rock, its nature varying from place to place.

But what raised his astonishment to its height was the discovery of some debris, undoubtedly of human origin, obtained from these mysterious depths. They were some pieces of bones obviously of human type, and also some odds and ends of weapons and implements, potsherds, vestiges of inscriptions in a language unknown, fragments of hard stone exquisitely worked, some sculptured into statues which were still almost intact, and some into the remains of delicately worked architecture, and so forth. Taken together, these discoveries led logically to the conclusion that about forty thousand years earlier, and thus twenty thousand years before the rise—nobody knew how or where—of the first representatives of contemporary man, human beings were already living in the same places and had arrived at a high degree of civilisation.

This was, indeed, the conclusion generally accepted, though there was at least one dissident.

This dissident was no other than Sofr. To admit that other races of men, separated from their successors by a gulf of twenty thousand years, had at one time peopled the earth, was, to his mind, sheer folly. What would have become, in that event, of the descendants of ancestors so long vanished? Rather than welcome so absurd an hypothesis it would be better to suspend judgment. Although these strange facts were unexplained, it did not follow that they were inexplicable; sooner or later, they would be interpreted. Until then it was better to ignore them, and to keep to the following principles, so fully satisfactory to the reason:

Planetary life might be divided into two phases: before and during the age of man. During the first the earth, in a state of perpetual change, was for that very reason uninhabitable and uninhabited. During the second the earth's crust had gained enough cohesion to stabilise it. At once, having at last a solid substratum, life had appeared. It had originated in the simplest forms, and became ever more complicated to reach its climax in man, its last and most perfect expression. Hardly had he appeared upon earth than he at once began his endless ascent. At a slow but sure pace he was on his way towards his goal, the perfect knowledge and the absolute domination of the universe . . .

Borne away by the heat of his convictions, Sofr had gone past his house. He turned round fuming.

'What!' he said to himself 'to admit that man—forty thousand years ago!—had reached a civilisation comparable with—if not superior to—that which we enjoy today? That its knowledge and achievements have vanished, without leaving the slightest trace, so completely that their descendants had to start right at the beginning, as if they were the pioneers in a world as yet uninhabited? . . . But that would be to deny the future, to announce that our efforts are all in vain, and that all progress is as precarious and as uncertain as a bubble of foam on the surface of the waves!'

In front of his house he stopped.

'Upsa nil . . . hartchok! (No, indeed ol . . .), Andant mir' hoë sphal . . . (man is the master of things . . .)'—he murmured as he opened the door.

When the Zartog was somewhat rested, he lunched with a good appetite, then stretched himself out for his daily siesta. But the questions over which he had been pondering as he was coming home still obsessed him and drove away sleep.

Greatly as he wished to demonstrate the complete unity of nature's methods, he had too critical a mind to fail to realise how weak his system was when it touched on the problem of man's origin and development. To adapt the facts to agree with a foregone conclusion, that is one way of convincing others, but not of convincing oneself.

If instead of being a savant, a most eminent zartog, Sofr had been classed among the illiterates he would have been less embarrassed. The people, in fact, without wasting their time in deep reflections, were content to accept with their eyes closed the ancient legend which from time immemorial had been handed down from father to son. Explaining one mystery by another, they had ascribed the origin of man to the intervention of a Higher Will. There was a time when that extra-terrestrial power had created out of nothing Hedom and Hiva, the first man and first woman, whose descendants had populated the earth. After that everything followed quite simply.

Too simply! As Sofr reflected. When you have given up trying to understand something, it is only too easy to bring in the intervention of a deity. But that makes it useless to look for an answer to the riddles of the universe, for no sooner are the questions asked than they are suppressed.

If only that legend had even the semblance of a serious basis! . . . But it was founded upon nothing. It was only a tradition, born in the epochs of ignorance, and thence transmitted from age to age. As for that name 'Hedom!' Where did that strange vocable come from, for it did not seem to belong to the language of the Andart'-Iten-Schu?

Confronted only with that trifling philological difficulty countless savants had worn themselves out unable to find any satisfactory answer . . . All nonsense that was, unworthy of a zartog's attention.

Sofr was still agitated as he went into his garden. Still, this was the hour when he usually did so. The setting sun shed a less scorching heat over the earth, and a warm breeze was beginning to blow in from the Spone-Schu. The Zartog wandered along the paths in the shadow of the trees whose

trembling leaves murmured in the wind from the open sea, and little by little his nerves regained their accustomed calm. He was at last able to shake off these troublesome thoughts and to enjoy the open air, to feel an interest in the fruits which formed the wealth of his garden, and in the flowers, its ornaments.

His chance footsteps bringing him back towards the house, he stopped on the edge of a deep excavation in which were scattered a number of tools. There, before long, would be laid the foundations of a new building which would double the size of his laboratory. But on this general holiday the workers had abandoned their task, and had gone off to enjoy themselves.

Sofr was rather casually estimating the extent of the work already done and still remaining to do when in the shadows of the excavation a shining point attracted his gaze. Interested, he went down into the depths of the hole, and freed a strange-looking object from the earth which partly covered it.

Returned to the daylight, the Zartog examined his find. It was a sort of container, constructed of some unknown metal of a greyish colour and a granular texture, and whose brightness had been dimmed by its long stay in the ground. At one third of its length, a crack showed that the case consisted of two parts one inside the other. He tried to open it.

At his first attempt the metal, disintegrated by time, fell into dust and revealed a second object which it contained.

The material of which this object was formed was a great novelty for the Zartog as the metal which had hitherto protected it. It was a roll of sheets superimposed and covered with strange signs, whose regularity indicated that they were written characters of an unfamiliar type. Sofr had never seen anything like them or even distantly resembling them.

Trembling with emotion, the zartog hurried to shut himself in his laboratory. After carefully spreading out the precious document he began to study it.

Yes, it was indeed writing, nothing could be more certain than that. But it was no less certain that this writing resembled none of those which, since the beginning of historic time, had been used anywhere on the surface of the earth.

Whence came that document? What did it signify? Such were the two questions which at once confronted Sofr's mind.

To reply to the first he had of course to be able to reply to the second. So it was first a question of reading and then of translating—for it could be affirmed *à priori* that the language in which this document was written was as unknown as its writing.

Would that be impossible? The Zartog Sofr did not think so. Without further delay he set feverishly to work.

The work lasted long, very long, for whole years. Sofr did not give up. Without letting himself get discouraged, he continued his methodical study of the mysterious document, advancing step by step towards the light. At last the day came when he grasped the key to this undecipherable riddle, the day when, though still with much hesitation and more trouble, he could translate it into the tongue of the Men-of-the-Four-Seas.

And when that day came, Zartog Sofr-Ai-Sr read what follows:

Rosario, May 24th, 2.

I date the opening of my narrative in this way although it was really drawn up much more recently and in very different surroundings. But in such a matter order is to my mind imperiously necessary, and for this reason I have adopted the form of a 'journal' written from day to day.

Thus it is May 24th that opens the narration of those frightful happenings which I propose to describe for the enlightenment of those who come after me—if indeed mankind is still entitled to count on any future whatever.

In what language shall I write? In English or in Spanish, which I speak fluently? No! I shall write in the language of my own country: in French.

That day, May 24th, I had invited a few friends to my villa in Rosario.

Rosario is or rather was a Mexican town, on the shore of the Pacific, a little to the south of the Gulf of California. About ten years previously I had settled there to direct the exploitation of a silver-mine which I owned. My affairs had gone surprisingly well. I was rich, very rich indeed—that word makes me laugh today!—and I was intending before long to go back to my own country, France.

My villa, a very luxurious one, was situated on the highest point of a large garden which sloped down towards the sea and ended abruptly in a steep cliff, over a hundred yards high. To its rear the ground rose still further, and by using the zig-zag roads

we could reach the crest of the mountains at a height of more than fifteen hundred yards. It was a very pleasant run—I had often climbed it in my car, a fine powerful open car of thirty-five horse-power, one of the best French makes.

I had been living at Rosario with my son Jean, a fine lad of twenty, when, on the death of some relatives distant by blood but near to my heart I welcomed their daughter Hélène, an orphan totally unprovided for. Since then five years had elapsed. My son Jean was now twentyfive and my ward Hélène twenty; in my secret heart I destined them for one another.

Our wants were attended to by a valet, Germain, by Modeste Simonat, an expert chauffeur, and by two servants Edith and Mary, the daughters of my gardener George Raleigh and his wife Anna.

That day, May 24th, there were eight of us sitting round my table, in the light of lamps fed by electrogenic groups installed in the garden. In addition to the master of the house, his son, and his ward there were five others, three belonging to the Anglo-Saxon race and two to the Mexican peoples.

Dr. Bathurst figured among the former and Dr. Moreno among the latter. Both were savants in the broadest acceptance of the word, but this did not keep them from being very seldom in agreement. At heart they were splendid fellows and the best friends in the world.

The two other Anglo-Saxons were Williamson, the owner of an important fishery in Rosario; and Rowling, an enterprising business man who had founded near the town a number of market gardens from which he was reaping a rich fortune.

As for the last of the guests, it was Señor Mendoza, president of the Rosario law-courts, a worthy man with a cultivated mind and of high integrity.

We reached the end of the meal without any noteworthy incident. What we talked about till then I have forgotten. Not so, on the other hand, regarding what we said as we smoked our cigars.

Not that our remarks were of any importance in themselves, but the brutal commentary soon to be made upon them could not fail to give them a certain piquancy. For this reason I have never been able to get them out of my mind.

We had come—how, it doesn't matter!—to speak of the wonderful progress accomplished by man. Then Dr. Bathurst said:

'It's a fact that if Adam (which naturally, as an Anglo-Saxon, he pronounced *Edem*) and Eve (which of course he pronounced *Iva*) were to come back upon the earth, they'd have a nice surprise!'

That was the beginning of the discussion. A fervent Darwinist, and a convinced supporter of natural selection, Moreno asked Bathurst ironically if he seriously believed in the legend of the Earthly Paradise. Bathurst replied that at any rate he believed in

God and that as the existence of Adam and Eve was stated in the Bible, he refused to question it.

Moreno retorted that he believed in God at least as much as his adversary, but it was quite likely that the first man and the first woman were only myths and symbols. So there was nothing irreligious in supposing that the Bible had meant thus to typify the breath of life introduced by the Creative Power into the first cell, from which all the others had then evolved.

Bathurst retorted that this explanation was specious and that for his part he thought it more complimentary to be the direct work of Divinity rather than to be descended from it by the intermediary of more or less simian primates . . .

I saw that the time had come for the discussion to get heated, but it suddenly ended, the two adversaries having chanced to find some common ground. It is this way, indeed, that such things usually finish.

This time, returning to their first subject, the two antagonists agreed, whatever might be his origin, in admiring the high degree of culture that man had attained, they enumerated his conquests with pride. We all joined in. Bathurst praised chemistry, brought to such a degree of perfection that it was tending to disappear and merge into physics; the two subjects were now becoming one, whose object was the study of immanent energy. Moreno praised medicine and surgery, thanks to which such researches had been made into the intimate nature of the phenomena of life that in the near future the immortality of living organisms might well be hoped for. They both congratulated themselves on the heights attained by astronomy. Were we not now in communication, failing the stars, with seven of the planets of the solar system?*

Wearied out by their enthusiasm, the two snatched some moments' rest. The others, in their turn, took advantage of this to put in a word, and we entered upon the vast field of practical inventions which have so profoundly modified human conditions. We praised the railways and the steamers, used for the carriage of heavy and cumbersome merchandise; the economical aeronefs, used by travellers who are not pressed for time; the pneumatic or electro-ionic tubes that traverse every continent and sea, used by people in a hurry. We praised the countless machines, each more ingenious than the other, of which, in certain industries, one alone can perform the work of a hundred men. We praised printing and the photography of colour and of light, sound, heat, and all the vibrations of the ether. We especially praised electricity, that agent so adaptable, so docile, and so thoroughly understood in its properties and in its nature, which enables us, with-

*From these words it must be assumed that at the ~~time~~ when this journal *will be written*, the solar system *will include* more than eight planets, and that man *will have* discovered one or several beyond Neptune.

out the slightest mechanical connection, either to work any mechanism whatever or to steer a vessel across or under the sea or through the air; either to write, to converse, or to see one another no matter how great the distance between us.

It was quite a dithyramb in which, I must admit, I took part. We were all agreed that mankind had reached an intellectual level unknown before our time, and that this justified us in believing in its definitive triumph over nature.

'However' broke in the gentle voice of President Mendoza, taking advantage of the silence which followed, 'I will venture to say that there may have been peoples, now vanished without leaving the slightest trace, who reached a civilisation equal or analogous to our own.'

'Which?' asked everybody at once.

'Oh well! . . . The Babylonians, for example.'

There followed a burst of mirth. To dare to compare the Babylonians with modern man!

'The Egyptians' Don Mendoza went on quietly.

We laughed louder than ever.

'There are the Atlanteans, too—it's only our ignorance that makes us regard them as legendary' the President continued. 'You might add that an infinity of other peoples, older than the Atlanteans themselves, may have appeared, prospered, and died out without our knowing anything about them!'

Don Mendoza insisted on his paradox and, so as not to hurt his feelings, we agreed to pretend to take him seriously.

'But look here, my dear president' Moreno insinuated, in the sort of tone one uses to make a child see reason, 'you don't want to claim, I suppose, that any of those ancient peoples could be compared to ourselves? . . . In morality, I agree that they reached the same degree of culture, but in material things!'

'Why not?' Don Mendoza objected.

'Because' Bathurst hastened to explain 'the great thing about our inventions is that they spread instantaneously over the earth: the disappearance of one people, or even a large number of peoples, would leave the sum of human progress intact. For human achievements to be lost, all mankind would have to vanish at once. Is that, I ask you, an admissible hypothesis? . . .'

While we were talking in this way, effects and causes went on interacting throughout the infinite universe, and less than a minute after Dr. Bathurst had asked this question, their final result would justify Mendoza's scepticism only too completely.

But we had no suspicion of this, and we went on talking quietly. Some leaning over the backs of their chairs, others with their elbows on the tables, we were all turning pitying glances on Mendoza, who, as we thought, had been completely floored by Bathurst's reply.

'First' the President replied unemotionally 'we can well be-

lieve that in the old days the earth had fewer inhabitants than it has now, so that one nation might be the only one to possess universal knowledge. Then I don't see anything absurd, on the face of it, in supposing that the whole surface of the globe should be overwhelmed at once!'

'Nonsense' we exclaimed in chorus.

It was at that very moment that there came the cataclysm.

We had hardly chorussed 'Nonsense!' when a terrible din broke out. The ground trembled and gave way under our feet, the villa shook on its foundations.

We rose, we jostled together; the victims of an indescribable terror, we rushed outside.

Scarcely had we crossed the threshold than the house collapsed, burying in its ruins President Mendoza and my valet Germain, who had been coming out last. After a few seconds' natural consternation we were going to try to rescue them when we saw Raleigh, my gardener, followed by his wife, rushing from his house at the end of the garden.

'The sea! . . . The sea! . . .' he was shouting at the top of his voice.

Turning towards the ocean, I stood there motionless, stupefied. It was not that I realised what I was seeing, but I felt at once that my whole surroundings had completely changed. And was not that enough to chill the heart with fright when the whole aspect of nature, that nature which we always think of as essentially changeless, could be so strangely transformed in a few seconds?

Yet I was not slow in regaining my presence of mind. The true superiority of man is not to conquer and dominate nature. It is, for the thinking man, to understand it, to hold the whole universe in the microcosm of his mind. It is, for the man of action, to keep a calm spirit before the revolt of matter. It is to tell himself: 'I may be destroyed, yes! but unnerved, never!'

As soon as I had regained my calm, I realised how the scene before my eyes differed from what I was accustomed to see. The cliff had vanished, simply vanished, and my garden was sloping down to the edge of the sea, whose waves, after destroying the gardener's house, were beating furiously against the lowermost flower-beds.

As it was hardly admissible that the level of the sea had risen, it necessarily followed that that of the land had fallen. The subsidence was more than a hundred yards, for that had hitherto been the height of the cliff, but it must have taken place fairly gently, for we had hardly perceived it. This explained the comparative calmness of the ocean.

A few minutes' thought told me that my theory was correct; what was more, it showed me that the descent had not yet stopped. Indeed, the sea was continuing to rise with a speed

apparently of about six feet a second—roughly four or five miles an hour. Given the distance between us and the foremost of the waves, we should thus be swallowed up in less than three minutes, if the speed of the subsidence stayed the same.

I came to a decision at once:

'My car! 'I shouted.

They saw what I meant. We dashed towards the garage, and dragged the car outside. In a twinkling it was filled with petrol, and we crowded pell-mell into it. My chauffeur, Simonat, swung the starting-handle, jumped to the wheel, engaged the clutch, and set off up the road in low gear, while Raleigh, having opened the gate, grabbed the car as it went by and hung on to the back springs.

It was high time! Just at the moment when the car reached the road, a wave broke, washing right up to the centre of the wheels. Bah! Now we could laugh at the pursuit of the sea. Although it was overloaded, my fine car would know how to keep us out of its reach as long as the descent into the gulf did not go on indefinitely . . . Indeed, we had plenty of room: two hours' climb at least, to a possible height of about fifteen hundred yards.

But I soon had to realise that it was not yet time to shout victory. After the first leap of the car had carried us about twenty yards beyond the line of foam, it was in vain that Simonat did his utmost: the distance did not increase. There could be no doubt about it: the weight of twelve people was slowing us down. However that might be, our speed was almost exactly that of the advancing water, which always kept the same distance away.

We soon realised our disquieting position and, except for Simonet, who had his hands full driving the car, we turned round towards the road we were leaving behind us. We could see nothing but water. As fast as we conquered it, the road vanished beneath the sea, which was conquering it at the same rate.

The sea itself was calm. A few ripples were quietly dying out against an ever-changing shore. It was a lake which kept on swelling, swelling, with a steady motion, and nothing could be more tragic than our pursuit by that calm sea. It was in vain that we fled before it; the water rose implacably with us . . .

Simonet was keeping his eyes fixed on the road. When we came to one of the turnings he told us:

'Here we are, half-way up the slope. Still another hour's climb.

We shuddered. What! Within an hour we were going to reach the top, and we should have to go or down, hunted, caught up perhaps, whatever our speed, by the masses of liquid which would crash like an avalanche on top of us! . . .

The hour passed without any change in the situation. We could already distinguish the summit of the hill when the car was violently shaken and made a lurch which threatened to

smash it against the stones by the side of the way. Meanwhile a great wave rose behind us, rushed forward to attack the hill, overhung and at last broke right over the car, which was surrounded by its foam . . . Were we going to be swallowed up? . . .

No! The water retired, seething, while the motor, suddenly panting more quickly, speeded up.

Where had that sudden acceleration come from? The cry that Anna Raleigh gave told us: the poor woman had just realised that her husband was no longer hanging on the springs. The backwash of the wave had torn the wretched fellow away, and that was why the lightened car was climbing the slope more easily.

Suddenly it stopped dead.

'What's up?' I asked Simonat. 'A breakdown?'

Even in these tragic circumstances, professional pride still maintained its rights: Simonat gave a disdainful shrug of his shoulders, by way of letting me know that to a chauffeur of his sort breakdowns were unknown. Then, raising his hand, he silently pointed ahead. Thus the stop was explained.

The road was cut less than ten yards away from us. 'Cut' is the very word; it might have been slashed with a knife. Beyond the sharp crest in which it ended, there was emptiness, a shadowy gulf in whose depths it was impossible to distinguish anything.

We turned round bewildered, sure that our last hour had come. The ocean which had pursued us even on to heights was bound to catch up with us in a few seconds.

Except for the unhappy Anna and her daughters, who were sobbing as though their hearts were breaking, we gave a cry of joyful surprise. No, the water was no longer moving upwards, or, more precisely, the earth had stopped falling. The shaking we had just felt had no doubt been the last manifestation of the phenomenon. The ocean had halted, and its level was still nearly a hundred yards below the point where we were grouped around our car, which was still throbbing, like an animal out of breath after a rapid run.

Shall we be able to get out of this predicament? We cannot know until daybreak. Until then, we shall have to wait. One after another we stretched ourselves out on the ground, and I think, God forgive me, that I must have fallen asleep . . .

During the night

I am suddenly aroused by a terrible noise. What time is it? I don't know. Moreover, we are still drowned in the shadows of night.

The noise is coming from the impenetrable gulf into which the road has collapsed. What has happened? . . . I could swear that masses of water were falling in cataracts, that gigantic waves

were violently crashing together . . . Yes, it must be that, for swirls of foam are reaching us, and we are covered by the spray.

Then gradually calm returns . . . Silence covers everything . . . The sky is getting lighter . . . It's daybreak.

May 25th

What agony, the slow realisation of our actual position! At first we can distinguish only our immediate surroundings, but the circle widens, grows ever wider, as if our disappointed hopes were lifting one after another an infinite number of flimsy veils;—and at last it is broad daylight, which dispels the last of our illusions.

Our situation is quite simple and can be summed up in a few words: we are on an island. The sea surrounds us on every side. Yesterday we should have seen a whole ocean of summits, several higher than the one on which we now find ourselves. These summits have vanished while, for reasons which must remain forever unknown, our own, though more humble, has been stopped in its gentle fall: in their place is a boundless sheet of water. On all sides, nothing but the sea. We are occupying the only solid point within the immense circle of the horizon.

A glance is enough to reveal the whole extent of the islet upon which some extraordinary chance has found us a refuge. It is indeed quite small: a thousand yards long at most, and five hundred in the other direction. To north, west, and south, its crest, rising only about a hundred yards above the waves, joins them by a fairly gentle slope. To the east, on the other hand, the islet ends in a cliff falling sheerly down into the ocean.

It is above all to that side that we turn our eyes. In that direction we ought to see range upon range of mountains, and beyond them the whole of Mexico. What a change in the space of a short spring night! The mountains have vanished, Mexico has been swallowed up! In their place is a boundless desert, the arid desert of the sea!

We stare at each other, terrified. Penned up, without food, without drinking-water, on this bare narrow rock, we cannot cherish even the faintest hope. We grimly lie down on the ground and set ourselves to wait for death.

On board the 'Virginia', June 4th

What happened during the next few days? I can't remember. Presumably I ended by at last losing consciousness; I only came back to my senses on board the vessel which picked us up. Then only did I learn that we had spent ten whole days on the islet,

and that two of our number, Williamson and Rowling, had died of hunger and thirst. Of the fifteen people whom my home had sheltered at the moment of the disaster, there were now only nine: my son Jean and my ward Hélène, my chauffeur Simonat, inconsolable at the loss of his machine, Anna Raleigh and her two daughters, Dr. Bathurst and Dr. Moreno—and lastly myself, I who hasten to jot down these lines for the edification of future peoples, assuming, that is, that they will ever be born.

The *Virginia*, which is carrying us, is a 'mixed' vessel—with steam and sails—of about two thousand tons, devoted to merchant traffic. She is a fairly old ship, rather a slow sailer. Captain Morris has twenty men under his command; he and his crew are English.

The *Virginia* left Melbourne under ballast a little over a month ago, sailing for Rosario. No incident had marked her voyage except, on the night of May 24th, a series of deep-sea waves rising to a prodigious height; but they were of a proportionate length and this made them inoffensive. However strange they might be, these waves could not have forewarned the captain of the cataclysm which was taking place at that time.

So he was amazed to find nothing but the sea where he had expected to make Rosario and the Mexican coast. Of that shore, there remained nothing but an islet. One of the *Virginia's* boats put off to that islet, on which eleven inanimate bodies were found. Two were only corpses; the nine others were taken on board. It was in this way we were saved.

On land—January or February

An interval of eight months separates the last of the preceding lines from the first which follow. I date these January or February because it is impossible to be more precise, for I have no longer any exact notion of time.

These eight months formed the most atrocious of our trials, those during which, getting ever more strictly rationed, we realised the full extent of our misfortune.

After picking us up, the *Virginia* cruised on at full steam towards the east. When I regained my senses, the islet where we had barely escaped death had long been below the horizon. According to our bearings, which the captain obtained from a cloudless sky, we were then sailing exactly over the place where Mexico should have been. But of Mexico there remained not a trace—no more than they had been able to find, while I was unconscious, of its central mountains; no more than any land what-

ever could be distinguished anywhere, no matter how far they looked. Everywhere, nothing but the infinity of the sea.

The realisation of this was indeed terrifying. We feared that our minds would give way. What! All Mexico swallowed up! . . . We exchanged horrified glances, silently asking one another how far the ravages of this frightful cataclysm extended . . .

Wishing to clear this matter up, the captain steered towards the north: even if Mexico no longer existed, it was unthinkable that this could be true of the whole continent of America.

Yet true it was. We cruised vainly northwards for twelve days without sighting land, nor did we sight it when we put about and steered southwards for nearly a month. However paradoxical it might appear, we had to give way to the evidence: yes, the whole of the American continent had been engulfed by the waves!

Then had we been saved only to experience the agonies of death a second time? We had certainly good reason to fear so. Without speaking of the food, which would give out sooner or later, a more urgent danger threatened us: what would become of us when our engines came to a standstill for lack of fuel? So the heart of an animal stops beating for lack of blood.

This was why, on July 14th—we were then almost at the former position of Buenos Ayres—Captain Morris let the fires die out and hoisted the sails. That done, he mustered all the personnel of the *Virginia*, passengers and crew, explained the position to us in a few words, and asked us to think it over and to make any suggestions we could at the council he meant to hold next day.

I do not know whether any of my companions in misfortune could think of any more or less ingenious expedient. For my part, I must admit, I was still hesitating, quite uncertain what to suggest, when the question was settled by a tempest that sprang up during the night. We had to fly westwards, swept along by a tempestuous gale, always on the point of being swallowed up by a raging sea.

The hurricane lasted thirtyfive days, without a minute's interruption, or even a momentary lull. We were beginning to despair of its ever ending when, on August 19th, the fine weather returned as suddenly as it had stopped. The captain seized the opportunity to take our bearings: his calculations showed 40° north latitude and 114° east longitude. These were the co-ordinates of Pekin!

Thus we had sped over Polynesia, and perhaps even over Australia, without realising it. There, where we were now floating, had once been the capital of an empire numbering four hundred million souls!

Then Asia had suffered the fate of America?

We were soon convinced of this. The *Virginia*, still heading for the south-west, reached the latitude of Tibet and then that of the

Himalayas. Here ought to have towered the highest summits of earth. Yet wherever we looked, nothing emerged from the surface of the sea. We had to believe that there no longer existed, anywhere on earth, any solid land other than the islet which had saved us—that we were the only survivors of the cataclysm, the last inhabitants of a world wrapped in the moving shroud of the sea!

If this were so, it would not be long before we too in our turn would perish. In spite of our strict rationing, our store of provisions was diminishing, and we had to give up all hopes of renewing them . . .

I will not dwell on the record of that frightful voyage. If, to describe it in detail, I were to try to relive it day by day, its memory would drive me mad. However strange and terrible were the events which preceded and followed it, however distressing the future seems—a future which I shall never see—it was during that infernal voyage that we reached the height of our fear.

Oh, that eternal cruise over an endless sea! To expect every day to get somewhere, and to see the end of the journey forever receding!

To live poring over the maps on which human hands had traced the irregular line of the coast, and to realise that nothing, absolutely nothing, remained of these lands which had once been thought eternal! To tell ourselves that the earth, quivering with innumerable lives, that the millions of men and the myriads of animals which had traversed it in every direction or had soared through the air, had gone out like a tiny flame in a breath of wind! To look everywhere for our fellows and to look in vain! To become little by little convinced that nowhere around us was any living thing, to realise ever more clearly our loneliness in the midst of a pitiless universe! . . .

Have I found words suitable for expressing my anguish? I do not know. In no language whatever are there terms adequate for so completely unprecedented a situation.

After ascertaining that where the Indian peninsula had once been the sea now flowed, we headed to the north-west. Without the slightest change in our condition, we crossed the Ural chain—which had now become a submarine range of mountains—and sailed on over what once had been Europe. We then descended southwards, to twenty degrees beyond the Equator. Next, weary of our fruitless search, we made our way back towards the north and traversed, even over the Pyrenees, the sheet of water which covered Africa and Spain.

To tell the truth, we were beginning to get used to our terror. Wherever we went, we marked our route on our charts, and said to one another: 'Here, this was Moscow . . . Warsaw . . . Berlin Vienna . . . Rome . . . Tunis . . . Timbuctoo . . . St. Louis . . . Oran . . . Madrid . . .' But we spoke with growing indifference,

and, having become habituated to it, we were at last able to pronounce these words, really so full of tragedy, without the slightest emotion.

But so far as I was concerned I had not yet exhausted my capacity for suffering. I can see it still, that day—it was about December 11th—when Captain Morris told me 'Here, this was Paris . . .' At these words I felt that my heart was being torn out. That the universe might be swallowed up, well and good. But France—my France!—and Paris, which symbolised her! . . .

From beside me came something like a sob. I turned round; it was Simonat who was weeping.

For another four days we pushed on towards the north; then, having reached the latitude of Edinburgh, we turned towards the southwest in search of Ireland, and then towards the east . . . We were really wandering about at random, for there was no reason to go in one direction rather than in any other . . .

We sailed above London, whose liquid tomb was saluted by the whole crew. Five days later, when we were at the latitude of Danzig, the captain decided to go about and gave orders that we were to head to the south-west. The helmsman obeyed passively. What difference could that make to him? Wasn't it the same on every side? . . .

It was when we had sailed in that direction for nine days that we swallowed our last scrap of biscuit.

As we stared at one another with haggard eyes, Captain Morris unexpectedly ordered the fires to be lighted. What notion was he giving way to? I still ask myself that; but the order was obeyed; the speed of our vessel increased . . .

Two days later we were suffering cruelly from hunger. After another two days, almost everyone obstinately refused to leave his bunk; there was only the captain. Simonat, a few members of the crew, and myself, with enough energy to keep the ship on course.

The next day, the fifth of our fast, the number of well-disposed steersmen and stokers had decreased still further. Another twenty-four hours and none of us would have the strength to stand.

We had then been travelling for more than seven months. For more than seven months we had been furrowing the sea in every direction. I think it must have been January 8th—I say 'I think' for I cannot possibly be more precise, for by now the calendar had lost much of its meaning for us.

And it was on that day, while I was at the wheel and devoting all my flagging attention to the compass, that I seemed to make out something towards the west. Thinking that I was the plaything of some error, I stared . . .

No, I was not mistaken!

I gave a veritable roar, then, hanging on to the wheel, I shouted at the top of my voice:

'Land on the starboard bow!'

What a magic effect those words had! All those dying men revived at once, and their haggard faces lined the starboard rail.

'Yes, land it is' said Captain Morris, after scrutinising the cloud rising above the horizon.

Half-an-hour later, it was impossible to feel the slightest doubt. It was certainly land which, after seeking it in vain all over the former continents, we had found in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean!

About three in the afternoon we could make out the details of the coast which barred our way, and we sank back into despair. In very truth this shore was unlike any other, and not one of us could remember ever seeing a coast so completely, so absolutely wild.

In the countries where we had lived before the disaster, green had always been the most abundant colour. Not one of us had ever known a coast so forsaken, a country so arid, that we could not find upon it a few shrubs, even if only a few tufts of gorse, or a few trails of lichen or moss. Here, nothing of the sort. All we could distinguish was a tall blackish cliff, at whose foot lay a chaos of rocks, without a plant, without a solitary blade of grass. It was the most complete, the most total, desolation that one could imagine.

For two days we coasted that abrupt cliff without finding the smallest gap. It was only towards the evening of the second day that we discovered a large bay, well sheltered against the winds of the open sea, in whose depths we let fall the anchor.

After reaching land in our boats, our first care was to collect some food from the shore, which was covered with turtles by the hundred and shell-fish by the million. In the crevices of the rocks we found fabulous quantities of crabs and lobsters, to say nothing of innumerable fish. To all appearances this sea was so richly inhabited that, failing any other resources, it would suffice to assure our subsistence for an indefinite time.

When we were restored, a gap in the cliff enabled us to reach the plateau, which we found to cover a wide expanse. The appearance of the coast had not deceived us: on all sides, in every direction, there was nothing but arid rocks, covered with sea weed and wrack—most of it dried up—without the smallest blade of grass, with no living thing either on the ground or in the sky. Here and there were tiny lakes, or rather ponds, gleaming in the sunshine, but when we sought to quench our thirst, we realised that they were salt.

To tell the truth, this did not surprise us. It confirmed what we had thought right from the outset, that this unknown continent was born yesterday and had risen, in one solid mass, from the depths of the sea. This explained both its aridity and its utter loneliness. It moreover explained this thick layer of mud, uni-

formly spread, which as the result of evaporation was beginning to crack and to fall into dust.

Next day, at noon, our bearings showed $17^{\circ} 20'$ north latitude and $23^{\circ} 55'$ west longitude. On consulting the map, we found that this was right in the open sea, nearly on a level with Cape Verde. And yet towards the west the land, and towards the east the sea, now extended out of sight.

However repulsive and inhospitable was this continent upon which we had set foot, we should have to be satisfied with it. For this reason the unloading of the *Virginia* was begun without further delay. We carried on to the plateau, at random, everything she contained. First, however, the ship had been securely moored with four anchors, in fifteen fathoms of water. In this quiet bay she was in no danger, and we could quite safely leave her to herself.

As soon as the unloading was complete, our new life began. In the first place we had to . . .

When he reached this point in his translation Zartog Sofr had to pause. In this place the manuscript had the first of its *lacunae*; this seemed to involve a large number of pages, and it was followed by several others which to all appearances were larger still. No doubt, in spite of the protection given by the case, many of the sheets had been attacked by damp; there remained only a few more or less lengthy fragments, their context having been destroyed. They were in the following order:

. . . beginning to get acclimatised.

How long is it since we landed on this coast? I no longer know. I asked Dr. Moreno, who keeps a calendar of the days as they flow by. He told me: 'Six months . . .' Then he added 'Within a few days,' for fear of being mistaken.

So there we are already! It's only needed six months for us not to be sure of keeping an exact count of time. That promises well!

But on the whole there is nothing surprising in our negligence. It takes all our attention, all our efforts, to keep ourselves alive. To feed ourselves is a problem whose solution takes the whole day. What do we eat? Fish, when we can find any, and every day that gets harder, for our ceaseless hunt is scaring them. We also eat turtles' eggs and a few edible seaweeds. By evening we have fed, but we are exhausted, and all we think about is sleep.

We have improvised some tents out of the *Virginia's* sails. I expect that soon we'll have to build some better shelter.

Sometimes we shoot a bird; the air is not so completely deserted as we had thought, and a dozen known species are represented on this new continent. They are one and all migratory birds: the swallow, albatross, and so forth. Presumably they can find no food on this land, devoid of vegetation as it is, for they never stop flying round our camp, and this helps to eke out our wretched meals. Sometimes we are able to pick up one that has died of hunger, which saves our powder and shot.

Fortunately, however, there is a possibility that our situation will become less wretched. We have found a sack of wheat in the *Virginia's* hold, and we sowed half of it. That will help us greatly when the wheat grows. But will it sprout? The ground is covered with a thick sheet of alluvium, a sandy mud enriched by the decomposition of the seaweeds; poor though its quality may be, it is soil all the same. When we landed it was impregnated with salt; but since then torrential rains have washed copiously over the surface, and all the depressions are now full of fresh water.

Yet the alluvial layer has been freed from its salt only on its surface; the streams and the very rivers which are beginning to form are all strongly brackish, and this shows that its depths are still saturated.

To sow the corn and keep the other half of it in reserve, we almost had to fight. Some of the *Virginia's* crew wanted to make all of it into bread at once. We have had to .

. . . that we had on board the *Virginia*. The two pairs of rabbits have run off into the interior and we haven't seen them since. I suppose they've found something to live on. Then does the land, unknown to us, produce . . .

. . . two years, at least, that we've been here! . . . The wheat had grown splendidly. We have almost as much bread as we want, and our fields are always getting wider. But what a struggle against the birds! They have multiplied amazingly, and all around our crops . . .

In spite of the deaths I mentioned, our little tribe is no smaller. On the contrary. My son and my ward have three children, and each of the three other households likewise. All these kids are in radiant health. Presumably the human species has a greater vigour, a more intense vitality, now that it is so much less numerous. But what causes . . .

. . . here for ten years, and we knew nothing about this continent. All we had seen of it was a distance of several miles round our camp. It was Dr. Bathurst who made us ashamed of our weakness: at his suggestion we got the *Virginia* into service, which took nearly six months, and made a voyage of exploration.

We got back the day before yesterday. The voyage lasted longer than we thought, because we wanted to carry it out thoroughly.

We went all round this continent which, everything makes us think, must be, with our islet, the only stretch of solid land that now exists on the earth's surface. Its shores seemed much the same everywhere, very craggy and very wild.

Our voyage was interrupted by several excursions into the interior; we especially hoped to find traces of the Azores and Madeira—situated, before the cataclysm, in the Atlantic Ocean, which certainly ought to make them a part of the new continent.—We could not recognise even the smallest vestige of them. All that we could find is that everywhere round their position the ground is upheaved and covered with a thick layer of lava; no doubt they were the centre of some great volcanic eruption.

Yet, if we failed to find what we were looking for, we found something we were not looking for at all! Half buried in the lava, in the latitude of the Azores, some evidences of human handiwork caught our eye—but not the handiwork of the inhabitants of these islands, our contemporaries of yesteryear. These were the remains of some columns and pottery, such as none of us had ever seen before. After studying them, Dr. Moreno put forward the theory that these remains must have come from ancient Atlantis, and that it was the volcanic flow that restored them to the light of day.

Dr. Moreno may be right. If it ever existed, the legendary Atlantis must certainly have been somewhere near the new continent. If so it is certainly very strange that three different races of man have followed one another in the same region.

However this may be, I declare that the problem leaves me cold: we have plenty to keep us busy in the present, without worrying about the past.

As soon as we got back to our camp, it struck us that, compared with the rest of the country, the region we occupied seems much favoured. This is due solely to the fact that the colour green, formerly so abundant in nature, is not completely unknown here, while it seems to have been radically suppressed elsewhere in the continent. We had not noticed this before, but it cannot be denied. Some blades of grass, which never existed at all before we landed, are now growing around us in fairly large numbers. They belong only to a few of the most common species, whose seeds were doubtless brought here by the birds.

It must not be inferred, however, that except for these familiar species there is no vegetation. Through the strangest work of

adaptation, on the other hand, a vegetation in at least a rudimentary and promising state exists all over the continent.

The marine plants which covered it when it emerged from the waves have mostly died in the sunlight. A few, however, persisted in the lakes, the ponds, and the puddles of water which the heat has gradually dried up. But at that time rivers and rivulets began to flow, and these were the more suited for the existence of wracks and seaweeds in that their waters were salt. When the surface, and then the depths, of the soil were deprived of their salt, and the water became fresh, most of these plants were destroyed.

A few, however, able to adapt themselves to the new living conditions, flourished in the fresh water just as they had in the salt. But the process did not stop there: a few of these plants, gifted with an even greater power of accommodation, adapted themselves first to fresh water and then to the open air. At first along the banks and then further and further away from them they have spread into the interior.

We surprised this transformation in the very act, and we can see how their structures are getting modified along with their physiological functions. Already a few stems are rising timidly towards the sky. We can foresee that one day a flora of great variety will thus be created and that a fierce struggle will begin between these new species and those surviving from the ancient order of things.

What is true of the flora is true also of the fauna. Along the watercourses we can see the former marine animals, mostly molluscs and crustaceans, in process of becoming terrestrial. The air is furrowed by flying fish, birds rather than fish, their wings having enlarged beyond all reason and their incurved tails allowing them to . . .

The last of the fragments contained, intact, the end of the manuscript:

. . . all old. Captain Morris is dead. Dr. Bathurst is sixtyfive; Dr. Moreno sixty; myself, sixtyeight. We shall all soon have done with life. First, however, we mean to finish the task we resolved on, and, so far as is in our power, we shall come to the aid of future generations in the struggle that awaits them. " "

But will they see the day, these future generations?

I should be tempted to say yes, if I considered only how my fellows are multiplying: the children are swarming, and, for the

rest, in this healthy climate, in this country where wild animals are unknown, life is long. Our colony has tripled in size.

On the other hand I am tempted to say no, if I consider the deep intellectual decadence of my companions in distress.

Yet our little group of survivors was in a favourable position to share in human knowledge: it included one exceptionally energetic man—Captain Morris, who died today—two men more cultivated than is usual—my son and myself—and two real savants—Dr. Bathurst and Dr. Moreno. With such components we ought to have been able to accomplish something. We have done nothing. Right from the outset the maintenance of our material life has always been, and is still, our sole care. As at first we spend all our time looking for food, and in the evening we fall exhausted into a heavy sleep.

It is, alas! only too certain that mankind, of which we are the only representatives, is in a state of rapid retrogression and is tending to revert to the animal. Among the sailors of the *Virginia*, men originally uncultivated, the brutal characteristics have become more marked; my son and I, we have forgotten what we knew; Dr. Bathurst and Dr. Morena have put their brains on the shelf. One might say that our cerebral life is abolished.

How lucky it is that, so many years ago, we made a survey of this continent! Today we shouldn't have the courage . . . And besides, Captain Morris, who led the expedition, is dead—and dead also, or rather decayed, is the *Virginia* which carried us.

At the beginning of our stay a few of us decided to build some houses. They were never finished and now they are falling in ruins. We sleep, as before, on the ground, whatever the season.

For a long time not a vestige has been left of the garments which covered us. For several years we contrived to replace them by seaweeds woven together in a style that was at first ingenious but soon became coarser. At last we got tired of making the effort, which the mild climate renders needless: we go naked, like those whom we used to call savages.

Eating, eating, that is our perpetual aim, our sole preoccupation.

Yet there still remains some remnants of our former ideas, our former feelings. My son John, now a grown man and a grandfather, has not lost all his affection, and my ex-chauffeur, Modeste Simonat, keeps a vague memory that I used to be his master.

But for them, for us, these faint traces of the men we once were—for in very sooth we are no longer men—will vanish for ever. The people of the future, who were born here, have never known any other existence. Mankind will be reduced to these adults—even as I write I have them before my very eyes—who do not know how to write or to count, who hardly know how to speak; and to these sharp-toothed youngsters who seem to be nothing but an insatiable stomach. And after them there will be

other adults and other children, and then still more adults and still more children, ever nearer to the animal, ever further away from their thinking ancestors.

I can almost see them, these future men, forgetting all articulate language, their intelligence extinct, their bodies covered with coarse fur, wandering about this sad wilderness . . .

Well, we want to try to avoid this. We want to do everything in our power to ensure that the achievements of the men among whom we once were shall not be completely lost.

Dr. Moreno, Dr. Bathurst and I, we are going to revive our stupefied minds, we are going to make ourselves recall what we once knew. We are going to share the task, and on this paper and with this ink which came from the *Virginia* we are going to set out all that we remember of the various branches of science, so that, later men, if they still exist, and if, after a more or less long period of savagery, they feel a revival of their thirst for light, will find a summary of what their predecessors have done. May they then bless the memory of those who strove, at all costs, to shorten the sorrowful road to be trodden by the brothers whom they will never see!

— At death's door

It is now nearly fifteen years since the above lines were written. Dr. Bathurst and Dr. Moreno are no more. Of all those who landed here, I, one of the oldest, I am almost the only one left. But death will soon take me in my turn. I can feel it rising from my frozen feet to my heart, which is about to stop.

Our work is done. I have entrusted the manuscripts which contain this summary of human knowledge into an iron chest landed from the *Virginia*, and which I have buried deeply in the earth. At its side I am going to bury these few pages rolled up in an aluminium container.

Will anyone ever find this material committed to the earth? Will anyone ever so much as look for it? . . .

That is for fate to decide. *A Dieu vat!*

As Zartog Sofr translated this strange document, a sort of terror seized upon his soul.

What! So the Andart'-Iten-Schu people were descended from these men who, after having wandered for long months across the desert of the ocean, had at last been washed up on

this point on the shore where Basidra now stood? So these wretched creatures had formed part of a glorious race of men, compared with which modern man could scarcely babble! Yet for the knowledge and even the memory of these peoples to be destroyed, what was needed? Less than nothing; an imperceptible shudder had run through the earth's crust.

What an irreparable misfortune that the manuscripts the document spoke of had been destroyed, along with the iron chest that contained them! But great though that misfortune was, it was impossible to cherish the slightest hope: while digging the foundations the workmen had turned up the earth in every direction. There could be no doubt that the iron had been corroded away by time, which the aluminium container had triumphantly resisted.

For the rest, it needed no more than this for Sofr's optimism to be irretrievably overthrown. Although the manuscript gave no technical details, it was full of general indications and showed quite unmistakably that mankind had at one time advanced further in the quest for truth than it had done since. Everything was there in this narrative, the notions that Sofr had cherished, and others that he had not dared to imagine—even to the explanation of the name of Hedom, over which so many vain quarrels had broken out! . . . Hedom, it was a corrupt form of Edem—itself a corrupt form of Adam—the said Adam being perhaps nothing more than the corrupt form of some other word more ancient still.

Hedom, Edem, Adam—that was the perpetual symbol of the first man, and it was also an explanation of his appearance on earth. Then Sofr had been wrong to deny that ancestor, whose reality the manuscript had proved once and for all, and it was the people who had been right in giving themselves such an ancestry. But, not only in that but in everything else, the Andart'-Iten-Schu had invented nothing. They had been content to repeat what had been said before.

And perhaps, after all, the contemporaries of the author of the narrative had likewise invented nothing. Perhaps they too had done nothing but to retrace the road traversed by other races of man who had preceded them on earth. Did not the document speak of a people whom it called the Atlanteans? It was these Atlanteans, no doubt, of whom Sofr's excavations had disclosed a few impalpable traces below the marine silt. What knowledge of the truth had that

age-old nation attained when the invasion of the sea had swept them from the earth?

However that might be, none of their work had remained after the catastrophe, and mankind had again to start at the foot of the hill in climbing towards the light.

Perhaps it would be the same for the Andart'-Iten-Schu. Perhaps it would again be the same after them, until the day . . .

But would the day ever come when the insatiable desire of mankind would be satisfied? Would the day ever come when they, having succeeded in climbing the slope, would be content to rest upon the summit they had at last conquered? . . .

Such were the meditations of Zartog Sofr, as he bent over this venerable manuscript.

This narrative from beyond the tomb enabled him to imagine the terrible drama which is forever played throughout the universe, and his heart overflowed with pity. Bleeding from the countless wounds from which those who had ever lived had suffered before him, bending beneath the weight of these vain efforts accumulated throughout the infinity of time, Zartog Sofr'-Ai-Sr gained, slowly and painfully, an intimate conviction of the eternal recurrence of events.